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THE

CHRISTIAN'S INSTRUCTER,

CONTAINING A SUMMARY

EXPLANATION AND DEFENCE

OF THE

DOCTRINES AND DUTIES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

By JOSIAH HOPKINS, A. M.
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"*To the law and to the testimony.*"—ISAIAH.

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DISTRICT OF VERMONT, *to wit:*

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighth day of October, in the fiftieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, the Reverend JOSIAH HOPKINS of the said District, hath deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit: "The Christian's Instructer, containing a summary explanation and defence of the doctrines and duties of the Christian Religion By Josiah Hopkins, A. M Pastor of the Congregational Church in New Haven, Vt. 'To the law and to the testimony.'—Isaiah" In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned."

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PREFACE.

BOOKS have become so numerous, and the commencement of a new publication an event so common, that unless an author can promise something *entirely new*, either in the matter of his publication, or in its arrangement, he is considered as making an unreasonable demand on the publick if he expect his book to be read. The author of the following work, while he would hold out no very flattering promises of this kind, deems it his duty to state some of the reasons by which he was led to undertake it. Being repeatedly favoured with an opportunity to witness the interest which is taken by Christians in general, in the examination of men for licensure or ordination, he was led to inquire whether a work which should exhibit little more than what is exhibited on these occasions, might not command so much interest as to be in many respects useful. Had it not been for the solicitation of friends on whose judgment he could not but place the most unshaken confidence, such a work would have been the extent of his endeavours. It is however a painful, but well-known fact, that the information of common Christians does not keep pace with the increase of books. It is true that their opportunities for obtaining books are far better than those enjoyed by their fathers; but their books in general seem better adapted to the student, than to the common Christian. Both on account of their own enjoyment and their usefulness in the world, they need clear and definite views of truth; but most of the books on the doctrines and practice of christianity at the present day, *with their opportunities to read and examine*, are not adapted to furnish them. Where a single branch of a subject is spread through a volume, it cannot be expected that men who have but little to spare, can be persuaded to purchase books of this kind sufficient to afford them any kind of a knowledge of their own faith, much less that definite and concise knowledge which they need. Neither will those who are favoured with competent teachers, while their minds are burdened with the cares and concerns of the present world, be able to remember from one week to another, so as to see the connexion and agreement between the different parts of the system. The consequences are, while the present age is fruitful in devices designed as weapons with which to oppose the truth, Christians are unarmed. They may have a confidence that their teachers are

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able to defend their faith, and that they have seen the conclusiveness of their arguments; but this confidence is of but little service as it respects their influence on others, so long as the arguments are not within their reach, and cannot be wielded by them. Not only so, but the great body of Christians have but little time to read. If their libraries contained a competent number of these books, they would not be able to read sufficiently to obtain those views which we have mentioned. Another of the consequences of this state of things is, some real Christians are bewildered and led away, where they are exposed to the buffetings of error. Others who were once sensible to the influence of truth, and seemed in a fair way to become Christians, are led to embrace errors that extinguish almost every ray of hope in their case. Through the whole of this work, the object has been to present the system of truth before the mind of the reader, in a manner as plain, as concise, and yet as conclusive as possible. It has appeared more important to give the substance of the best arguments, rather than a multiplicity of them, or a few drawn out to a great length. In this way, the author has constantly endeavoured to compass his prominent design—*to give the system of truth*, and the arguments by which it is supported, in a manner so brief and definite, that both the labour of reading it so as to understand it, and the expense, may be within the power of common people.

A free use has been made of the works which are named at the close of the different subjects. Others have been consulted, but the substance of the various subjects is taken from those that are mentioned.——To expect, in a work like this, to meet the minds of all, even of those who imbibe substantialy the sentiments of the author, would be vain in the extreme. From various causes, different sentiments will appear the most important to different persons; of course, it is impossible that all should be satisfied with the degree of attention that has been paid to each. The whole work has been written under a deep sense of the delicacy of such an undertaking, and of the utter impossibility, especially for one in the circumstances of the author, to accomplish it without exposing himself to criticism. He is not unwilling however to own, that he has cherished an expectation which has afforded him no inconsiderable support under all the trials and embarrassments he has felt. He has flattered himself that a large class of Christians and other inquirers after truth, may be enlightened, and lastingly benefitted by his labours, notwithstanding their imperfections.

New-Haven, October 13, 1825.

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ERRATA.

Page 36 line 20 from top, for *put out* read *put it out*, &c.
47 reference c for verse 38 read 33.
53 ref. *e* for verse 16 read 20.
59 ref. *b* for 1 Cor v read 1 Cor xv.
60 ref. *a* for 1 Tim i read 1 Tim. iii.
62 ref. *b* for verse 31 read 3, 4.
92 ref. *a* for ee read *see* and for verse 23 read 3.
93 ref. *d* for 1 John i read 1 John ii &c.
96 ref. *a* for Ezek xxi read Ezek. xviii. &c.
110 ref. *c* for 2 Tim read 1 Tim. &c
151 ref. *a* for 1 John read John
158 ref. *a* for 1 Tim read 2 Tim &c
162 line 2 from top, for *before mind* read *before the mind.*
168 ref. *a* for Tim. read 2 Tim. &c
201 in a few copies for *aionos* read *aioon*.
229 line 11 from top, insert *the* at the end.
293 ref. *a* for Acts vi. 12, read Acts vi. 1, 2.

Most of the above errors are found in but few copies.

THE

CHRISTIAN'S INSTRUCTER.

SECTION I.

Natural Religion.

Question 1. What are we to understand by natural religion?

Answer. That knowledge of the divine character, and of our duty, which may be derived from the light of nature, without the aid of revelation.

Q. 2. In what respect is this religion deficient?

A. 1. It does not give us, with sufficient clearness, the moral character of God. Every reflecting mind must be anxious to know distinctly, something of his moral character, whose natural perfections, such as wisdom and power, we see in every object around us.

2. We cannot, from the light of nature, ascertain the service with which God will be pleased. We may determine that we are dependant, and from this we may infer the existence of obligation; but what returns, or what service, will be most acceptable to him, it is impossible to decide.

3. We can derive from the light of nature, no satisfactory explanation of divine providence. Why the present life should be short and uncertain, and why our course through it should be so often beset with trials and afflictions, is a ques-

tion that we can never answer, in consistency with that wisdom which we discover in the works of God. Although as we have observed, the moral character of the Deity cannot be drawn from the light of nature, with sufficient clearness to satisfy the mind; yet it is acknowledged by all who pretend to believe in his existence. But how shall we reconcile the inequality which we often witness in the circumstances of men, when compared with their characters, either with justice or benevolence? Is it not a fact, that many who *live* by oppression and injustice, are exempted from most of the trials and difficulties which press hard upon others, who are far more upright and benevolent in their characters?

4. The light of nature gives us no knowledge on which the mind can rest, concerning the termination of our present state of existence. That we must soon leave this world, we may easily determine; but whether we shall exist in another, or if we should, in what condition we shall be placed, we can form but faint and uncertain conceptions. These are a few of the most prominent defects of the religion of nature.

Q. 3. What evidence does the light of nature afford of the existence of God?

A. It is evident from our own existence and that of every thing with which we are surrounded. It is one of the first principles with which we become acquainted, and one which is universally acknowledged, that to every thing which has a beginning, therere must be a cause. That we now exist, we have not the least doubt; and that we have not always existed, is equally as certain. That we have been the cause of our own existence, is obviously impossible. The same remark is true of every existence, which has had a beginning. To the idea of causation, we uniformly affix that of intention, or exertion; and the supposition, that an event can exert itself, or operate to produce itself, before it has a being, is as

great an absurdity as can be contained in no greater number of words. There must then be a cause for every existence which is not eternal; and that cause for the same reason, must be self-existent. If we suppose the world and its inhabitants to have been the work of some dependent being, to whom sufficient power has been delegated, (if the supposition were possible) still it must be seen, that this dependent being, must have been the work of another; and that of another; and so on in an endless series; or, every existence must have been the work of an independent and Almighty Agent.

We are conducted to the same conclusion, by a view of *power*, as it appears in the various operations of nature. That power is not an inherent property of matter, may be easily determined beyond a doubt. In the movements of every body of matter, of which we have any knowledge, power is evidently communicated. If two bodies of matter come in contact, and one of them, from the rapidity of its motion, or from any other cause, moves with double the power of the other; in overcoming the smaller, and destroying its power, it will lose one half of its own. From this, it is evident, that no created dependent being, can put forth any power, but what it has received, and that just in proportion, as it communicates to others, its own is diminished. We are then brought to the conclusion, that the origin of all power, must be a being who can communicate to any extent, without diminishing his own.

Now in the motions of the immense bodies of matter, which are moving round each other, there is an astonishing exhibition of power. We may say that they possess the power of attraction, and in this way, hold each other by a perfect balance; but from a principle we have already established, it is plain that they have no power but what they have received.

Besides, the principle of attraction, whatever it may be, will

not account for the motion of a body, only when it moves in a right line towards that by which it is attracted. Of course, this principle may be the reason why a body, *when it has received a projectile force*, moves in a circle, rather than in a straight line. It is then plain, that every moving body must have received at first, a projectile impulse from the hand of him who made it; and that he who gave it this impulse, must be Almighty.

Viewing the movements of the heavenly bodies, and the various operations in the world, and the power by which the whole is effected in this point of light, it may be said with truth, that we may as distinctly see God, with our natural eyes, as we can see each other. When we look at one of our fellow-beings, we see nothing but the operations of a mind or spirit upon a mass of clay. The mind itself, is entirely concealed from our sight, and its effects only, are the objects of our vision. In all the operations of nature, with equal plainness, we can see the effects of an Almighty and intelligent agent.

2. The being of God is evident from the marks of *design* and *intelligence* which we discover in all his works. Every kind of being which inhabits our world, is wisely adapted to the circumstances in which it is placed. What an endless variety we may discover in the provisions which have been made for the support of man and beast! How many and how infinitely important are the purposes, which are accomplished in promoting the subsistence and happiness of man, by the single article of water! The ocean is the "higway of nations," and the reservoir of the world. By means of this, men upon opposite sides of our world are neighbours; and by means of this, an endless variety of streams are sent into every part of it, to preserve and heal, and feed its inhabitants.

We may easily see, that numberless and insupportable evils

would accrue to our world, were it not for that *variety*, that we see in the appearance and voices of men. Were it not for this, how impossible it would be to discern between friends and enemies, judges and criminals! How important also to the peace of society, is that difference which exists in the hand writing of different men! We discover (if possible) still greater wisdom in preserving amidst all this variety, important degrees of *resemblance*. Were it not for this resemblance, men would not be distinguished from the beasts. There would be no such thing as one species, or race of beings, that could be distinguished from another.

This wisdom may be seen also, if we extend our views to that system of worlds, of which, ours is but an humble part. *Yonder* is a sun which is capable of diffusing light; *here* is a world for it to enlighten, and without the influence of that sun, this world would be wrapped in gloomy and perpetual darkness. How can we but admire this adaptation of one thing to another? In the harmonious movements also, of those worlds around each other, we can trace the same incontestible marks of design.

Now what do we discover among all the works of art in our world, which, in point of wisdom and design, can be compared with the works of God! Might we not as rationally conclude, that the mechanism and art, which we discover in a clock, or in a regular and extended palace, have been produced intirely without design, as that the human body, or the solar system, came into existence but by the design of an Almighty and intelligent agent.

From what cause did *man* derive his intelligence, unless it be from his Creator? Is it not an allowed principle, that causes cannot communicate what they do not possess? How absurd then is the supposition, that man is the production of any possible combinations of mere matter! How full is the

evidence, that he must have been the work of an infinitely wise Being!

Q. 4. Has not the world, and its race of inhabitants, existed from eternity?

A. 1. If the earth has existed without beginning, its surface must have been long before this time reduced to a perfect level. That the hills are wearing away, and that the channels are filling up, is a fact about which, we can have no doubt. We can easily see, that the smallest continual change of this nature, in a duration of infinite length; would have reduced the surface of the earth to a plane.*

2. It is difficult to conceive, how that which is eternal, can admit of change. As the natural state of matter is rest, it must be apparent, that if there be no additional impulse, the earth with every other body with which it is connected, would have either ceased to move, or that all its motions would have become perfectly and unalterably regular.

3. It is incredible that the world has existed without beginning, since we have no historical accounts, on which we can place the least dependance, of more than six thousand

* If it should be doubted whether the channels of rivers and seas are thus filling up, the reader is desired to look at the following statement, which may be relied on as correct. The tongue of land on which Alexandria was built, 900 years before that time did not exist. The nearest mouth of the Nile has been literally filled up, and the lake Mareotis is almost reduced to nothing; and that within a period so recent as to leave no room to doubt the faithfulness of history. The Rhine, the Po, and the Arno, since they have been confined within dikes, have been constantly elevating their beds, and pushing forward a large bank of alluvial ground into the waters into which they run. The river Mississippi, it is well known, has deposited such immense quantities of alluvial earth, as to create banks by its side, and to raise its own bed above the land that lies back of these banks, for more than a hundred miles. Romana, in the time of Augustus Cæsar, enjoyed the privileges of a sea-port; but is now a league at least from the sea. Adria, which gave name to the Adriatic, was once the chief port of that sea, is now inland six leagues. That a similar process may be seen at the mouth of all the important rivers, the reader will be stisfied by looking at *Faber's Difficulties of Infidelity*, Sec. III. This fact affords an argument against the eternity of the world, of no inconsiderable weight and importance.

years. What alterations have been made in our world—what improvements in the arts and sciences within the space of three thousand years! and yet, what is that period compared with eternity? Can we conceive that our race has existed without beginning, and so little improvement was made till within three thousand years, when so much has been made since that period? If, to evade this, it should be said that by various accidents and calamities, mankind may have been nearly destroyed, and their improvements lost; we answer by inquiring, how many times this must have been done, during a space of eternal duration? and what, unless it be an Almighty and infinitely wise agent, could have preserved the world through an infinite series of such narrow escapes?

4. If the world has existed from eternity, there must have been an eternal series of men, of days, of years, &c. Now an eternal or infinite series of events or things, is a contradiction in terms, as may be shown in various ways. Every individual in a series, is a unit; but a series of units, however long, may be numbered: it cannot, therefore, be infinite. Again, every individual in this series, must have had a beginning, and of course, the series itself, must have had a beginning. Again, if there have been an eternal series, there must have been an *infinite* number of days, and *twenty four times* that number of hours, and one thousand four hundred and sixty times as many minutes. Thus it is plain, that the notion that the world has existed from eternity, in many ways, destroys itself. It must have been created by an Almighty and infinitely wise agent.

It may be remarked, that however conclusive the arguments from the light of nature may appear, to prove the existence of God, such as are still more irresistible, may be drawn from divine revelation. Every argument that proves, that the bible is

a revelation from God, is equally conclusive in proof of his existence. Thus for instance, the fulfilment of every prophecy, proves that there is a Being, who is as well acquainted with the future as the past, and who, of course, must be God.

Dwight's Theology—Boyle's Lectures—Doddridge's Lectures—Difficulties of Infidelity—Campbell's Lectures—Paley's Theology.

SECTION II.

Truth of Revelation.

Q. 1. What evidence have we, that God has given to our world, a revelation of his will?

A. 1. It is highly probable from the fact, that we stand in great need of some light and knowledge, that we cannot otherwise obtain. We have already shown, that from the light of nature, we cannot obtain clear and satisfactory views of the moral character of God; that we know nothing of that worship with which he will be pleased; and that we are left entirely in doubt and uncertainty with regard to our existence in a future world. Is it to be believed, that a being, who has exhibited so many marks of benevolence towards our world, would leave us wholly in the dark, on points as important as these?

2. It is evident that the Bible is a revelation from God, because it contains precisely that kind of information that we most need. However obscure its representations may be on some subjects, on every question connected with our present duty and interest, or our future and eternal destiny, it speaks with unambiguous plainness. As far as it can be investiga-

ted or comprehended, the moral character of God is clearly revealed. On this subject, so intimately connected with our present and future happiness, we have no longer a doubt, if we believe and understand the Scriptures. The service which he requires of us, the feelings we must cherish towards each other, together with the principles on which we may satisfactorily explain his providences, and all the knowledge that we need concerning a future state of existence, is explicitly set before us. Our curiosity is not gratified with an answer to every question that might be suggested concerning the manner of our existence in the future world; still, so far as knowledge on that subject is requisite, either to direct or encourage us in the discharge of our various duties, there is no possible deficiency. The character we must sustain in order that we may cherish the fairest hopes, and the certainty of a future existence, are revealed with a plainness, that effectually removes every doubt.

3. The doctrines and precepts of the Bible, are such as we might have expected from a being of infinite wisdom and perfection, could we have known beforehand that a revelation of his mind and will was intended. Although we can form but imperfect conceptions, *a priori*, what it would be suitable for such a being to reveal; yet we may rationally conclude, that it would be on the one hand adapted to the necessities of men, and on the other, to secure the dignity of his own character. Would it not be safe to conclude, that if he give us any rules for our conduct, they would be such as might be perfectly obeyed, without intruding upon the rights of each other? Much as mankind are inclined to differ in their opinions about the meaning of the bible, do not all that pretend to believe it, acknowledge that such is the tendency of the divine law? If the spirit of this law were perfectly obeyed, it is obivous that every thing that disturbs the peace

and happiness of society would be removed. That there is an important defect in the characters of men by nature, is a truth which we may derive with undoubting certainty, from the injuries which they suffer from each other; and we may rationally expect, that a revelation from God would be adapted to remedy this evil. Accordingly we find, that in the Bible, the nature of this defection is explained, and a foundation is laid for our reconciliation, to him and to each other.

Again, it is evident that the Bible is a revelation from God, from the nature of its doctrines and requisitions. That the precepts and doctrines of the Bible, meet with violent opposition from the spirit of this world, is a truth so well attested by our own experience and observation, as to need no other proof. Those practices with which men are pleased, to relinquish which, they will not be persuaded, are by the Bible, plainly and fearfully condemned. Notwithstanding all the hopes they cherish, while they refuse to relinquish their vices, they are threatened in the Bible with eternal death. May we not then safely conclude, that the Scriptures could not have been the production of vile and ungodly men? Did the instance ever occur when men of this description, gave rules for life so directly at war with every feeling of their hearts, and by the penalties of which, they pronounced the most terrible punishment upon themselves? But the supposition that the Bible could have been the production of good men, and yet not be what it claims to be, a revelation from God, is still more absurd. If we admit that the writers of the Bible were honest, the question with regard to its truth, will be forever at rest. The passages in which it claims to be the word of God, are so numerous, and the circumstances in which this claim is advanced, are so various, that to suppose that they could have been deceived, is impossible. By looking at other pretended revelations from God, we shall see that

this reasoning accords with fact. The system, (if we may so call it) of Mohammed is such as we might naturally have expected, viewing him as an unprincipled and ambitious man. We see merely that spicing of self-denial, which a man of his foresight, after having read the bible, might readily deem necessary to give his book the appearance of a revelation; while it is filled with all that could cherish the pride, and inflame the passions, of our fallen nature.

Again, there are many testimonies from ancient writings and traditions, which correspond with the leading and most important facts contained in the Bible. In some of the most ancient writings we have an account of the law of Moses, as forbidding the worship of images—also of the departure of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and their encampment at Mount Sinai—of the skill of Moses in working miracles—of the miraculous supply of water in the wilderness, &c. In others, Moses is said to be the author of a volume preserved with great care, in which the worship of images and the eating of swine's flesh were forbidden. Traditions concerning the flood and the preservation of Noah—of the building of Babel and the confusion of languages, are numerous. But the most important of all the traditions, in point of testimony, are those which relate to the offering of sacrifices, and the division of days into weeks. The custom of offering sacrifices, it is well known, prevailed through all the heathen world from time immemorial. What could have suggested such a method to appease the anger of the Deity, had it not descended by tradition from a divine institution? Is it not more rational to suppose this to have been the origin of the custom, than that it should have originated among the heathen? But in reference to the division of days into weeks, as it will be seen to be wholly arbitrary, we see no way to evade the conviction that it descended from a divine appoint-

ment. Now that these traditions should have existed, if the history of the Bible be true, must certainly appear rational; but if not, how is it possible to account for them? These testimonies are taken from writers who lived several centuries previous to the coming of Christ.

But when we come along down to the gospel dispensation, the evidence which we derive from this kind of testimony, becomes far more conclusive and satisfactory. It is supposed by some that the crucifixion and death of Christ, and the subsequent events which are recorded in the New Testament, were not known scarcely beyond the limits of the neighbourhood where they occurred, till centuries after they took place. This impression, however, has nothing to support it but the most pitiable ignorance. The testimony that may be gathered from authors, who lived immediately after the days of the Saviour and his apostles, whose works have survived the ravages of time, is of the most convincing kind. It affords us relief upon a point on which it is extremely natural in our inquiries upon this subject, to be anxious. It is natural for us to inquire, how soon the New Testament was received and considered as of divine authority, by the Churches? It appears on examination, that it was received immediately, and considered in point of authority and obligation, as superior to all human compositions. The reasons which are given are such as naturally offer themselves to our minds.—The writers were admitted to be fellow-labourers with our Lord, and enjoyed his instructions, and gave evidence by the miracles which they wrought, that they had been commissioned by him, and by him endued with supernatural power. Among the numerous testimonies that might be cited in proof of this point, we have room for but few. Barnabas, who was the companion of Paul, in an epistle to the Churches, quotes the gospel of St. Matthew as of divine authority. Clement,

who was another of his fellow-labourers, and whose name we find in his epistles, has sundry quotations from the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and from the epistles of paul to the Romans, and 1 Cor. and the Hebrews. Hermes, another of the companions of the apostle, whose name he mentions in his epistle to the Romans, has left an epistle containing allusions to the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John. Ignatius, who became Bishop of Antioch in less than forty years after the ascension of our Lord, has left in his writings, references to Matthew, John, and the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. In a book written by Polycarp, who had been taught by the apostles, there are more than forty undoubted allusions to the different books of the New Testament. What renders the testimony of these men and their contemporaries of great importance, in this investigation, is the fact that they are individually quoted by almost all the noted writers in the four succeeding centuries. As we come along down from that period, witnesses who assure us that the writings of the New Testament were early received as divine inspiration, become more numerous. Merely to give the character of their testimony, we will cite the words of Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp:—"We have not received the knowledge of the way of salvation by any others, than those, by whom the gospel has been brought to us: Which gospel they first preached, and afterwards by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come, the foundation and pillar of our faith: For after that our Lord rose from the dead, and the apostles were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghost, coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things."

In addition to this direct testimony, that the Scriptures were thus early received as divine inspiration, the same point is supported by other considerations. They were early cir-

lected into a volume, and viewed by the churches as superior to other writings. In support of this, we have the testimony of Ignatius, who, as we have seen, was Bishop of Antioch within less than forty years from the crucifixion of our Saviour: And also, of Eusebius, Irenæus, Melito, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian. Most of these writers lived within less than two hundred years of the commencement of the Christian era.

The writings of the New Testament in their present form, were early distinguished by appropriate appellations of respect. To this we have the testimony of the same writers, together with that of Justin Martyr, Dionysius, Theophilus, and Origen.

Again, the Scriptures were, at this early period, publickly read and expounded in religious assemblies.

Commentaries were written upon them—different copies were carefully examined, and translations made of them into different languages.

Lastly, the Scriptures, as we now have them, were appealed to, in controversies, both by friends and enemies. To all these points, the testimonies from the various writers of the three first centuries, are so full and explicit, as to leave no room for a remaining doubt. In the fourth century, Christianity became the most prevalent religion in the world. To look for testimony of this kind from that period, is like searching after light under a meridian sun, when there is not a cloud to obscure it.

Again, the *miracles* which are recorded in the Bible, are an evidence that it is divine inspiration. A miracle, is an event which is *out of*, or *above* the common course of nature. Our Saviour appealed to the miracles which he wrought, as a proof that he was the true Messiah, and endued with divine power.—"Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father

in me, or else believe me for the very works' sake." *a* The apostles depended much on the miracles which had been wrought by the Saviour, as evidence of his divine mission.—"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as *ye yourselves also know*." *b* The evidence arising from the miracles which have been wrought by the Saviour and his apostles, is such as derives no advantage from explanations or comments. Whoever believes the record that is given of them, or in other words, whoever believes that they were wrought, has a conviction upon his mind, that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, which cannot be deepened by any comments whatever. Aware of this, the enemies of the Bible when endeavouring to destroy this argument, instead of attempting to prove that a miracle is no evidence of divine and supernatural power, have aimed their blows at the foundation itself, by attempting to disprove the account. It may, perhaps, be thought an exception to this remark, that the most bold, and has been considered by many, the most successful attack that has ever been made on the argument derived from miracles, was the attempt made by Mr. Hume; in which he affected to discover, that from the nature of things, a miracle is utterly incapable of being proved. As this fancied discovery has occasioned among the enemies of the Bible no small degree of triumph, it may not be improper to give it a brief examination. The substance of his argument may be stated thus: A miracle, is a violation of the laws of nature.—The laws of nature are known and established only by experience; and as we can derive testimony on any point whatever, only from experience, there can be no proof in favour of a miracle.

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a John xiv. 11. *b* Acts ii. 22.

In an able and careful examination of this argument, Dr. Campbell has shown, that the following, among many other absurdities, must flow from it, as legitimate results.—1, If testimony be derived wholly from experience, then the credulity of mankind would increase as they advance in years, or in other words, as they increase in experience, which is directly contrary to fact.—2, Upon this principle, we can never be furnished with evidence sufficient to induce a belief in any event, that has not come within our own observation. With a view to free himself from this apparent absurdity, Mr. Hume attempted to justify the king of Siam as acting a rational and philosophical part, in refusing to believe, because it was contrary to his experience, that water would ever congeal: But we may easily see that the same principle would lead us to refuse our assent to any new discovery whatever. In fact, we see not how, upon this principle, we can be justified in believing *any thing*, however common. As there must be a first time to every occurrence, when it comes within our notice, so for that time, it must not obtain our belief, because it is not according to our experience, and for the same reason it must be precluded from all further trial, and of course, every door to improvement will be closed forever.

It is again objected, that if we admit the existence of miracles as evidence of the truth of what they are designed to establish, then we must admit the truth of many of the pagan rites, and the popish superstitions. That there have been produced in proof of both of these, many pretended miracles, we readily admit. But in comparing them with the miracles recorded in the scriptures, they uniformly fail in the following particulars:—1, They were not wrought before witnesses whose testimony would be allowed on any principle, as evidence.—2, Their effects were not lasting and open to investigation. Without these marks, no miracles can be entitled

to any credit. The miracles which were wrought by Moses in the deliverance of Israel, were wrought in the presence of the whole nation. They were such as could be attested by the senses. The children of Israel certainly could know, whether they passed the channels of the Red Sea, while the waters were standing in heaps by their sides. Ceremonies, such as the passover, which never could have been imposed upon that nation, neither at that time, nor in any succeeding age, had the events never existed, which they were designed to commemorate; are remaining at the present day, as standing monuments of the truth of those miracles. As they were taught to instruct their children that the object for which these ceremonies were observed, was to commemorate these miracles, had any impostor, in any after age, attempted to impose these observances upon them, upon the supposition that the events had not existed, he must have brought them to believe that they *had* observed them from their childhood, when in fact, they had never before heard of them. The same remarks are applicable to the resurrection of Christ: But as we design to make this a distinct argument, we shall waive a further notice of it, for the present. It will be seen that all the miracles wrought by our Saviour, were wrought in the presence of his enemies. Their effects were lasting, and open to investigation. His enemies were constrained to acknowledge that he wrought them, as it appears from their endeavouring to ascribe the agency by which he wrought them, to an evil spirit. The blind which he restored to sight, continued to see; the dead which he restored to life, continued to live, and remained among his enemies as living testimonies of his power. This was admitted by such as attempted to oppose the testimony of the Apostles and primitive Christians. How different from this, in every important respect, are the miracles said to be wrought by Vespasian; and at

the tomb of the Abbe Paris! They were never seen by unbelievers, nor enemies; and they were not attested by a sufficient number of witnesses. Those especially at the tomb of the Abbe, on which, the enemies of Christianity, place the greatest reliance, were seen only by those, who were anxious to have them believed. Besides, they were at best but temporary cures of diseases, when various other remedies were in operation. Many of these cures, it is well known, were of but short duration.

It now remains that we give some direct arguments, in addition to those derived from their nature, to prove the existence of those miracles attributed to Christ and his Apostles. We have shown that the enemies of Christ, admitted that he wrought miracles. This is certainly as much, as will be expected we shall produce from them, on the supposition that they are true. On the other hand, the testimony of his friends has not been sufficiently examined, to discover its real weight. How can it be doubted but that they have given us every particle of evidence of their sincerity in their power? They affirm with simplicity and apparent honesty, that these miracles were wrought, and every step, and every action in their lives, shows that they sincerely believed it. They endured every suffering that a malicious ingenuity could invent, and eventually sealed their testimony with their blood. It must be acknowledged that the Saviour and his Apostles were either honest, and were prosecuting a benevolent design, or they were united in a vile and hypocritical deception. If they were impostors, the conduct of Judas must appear unaccountable. No collusion, it is certain, could have existed among them, unknown to him. Now that any man can honestly believe that Judas, for betraying the ringleader of a vile and intriguing junto, should be so stung with remorse as to ay violent hands upon himself, is too much for our charity.

If it were not remorse, why did he not reveal the whole plot? Where was Judas when evidences against the Saviour were so much wanted? The only question that now remains, since their honesty cannot be doubted, is, whether they were competent witnesses. It will be said, if a willingness to suffer and to die, will prove their testimony to be true, then paganism will not be wanting for evidence. In answer to this, we remark, it must be admitted, that when a heathen is willing to die in attestation of his belief, it is conclusive evidence that he is sincere. Now let us have the same charity for the Apostles and primitive Christians, and the question is decided at once. All that we wish to prove by this willingness to suffer and to die, is, that they were honest; *they were in circumstances to know beyond the possibility of deception, the truth of what they attested.* They did know whether Lazarus lived, and associated with them, after his resurrection. They did know whether the foundations of the prison were rent, and they were liberated from their chains. The same remarks are applicable to all the miracles recorded in the New Testament. But this cannot be said in the case of the heathen. Howevever sincere they may be, it will not be pretended that they know any thing about the supposed incarnations of their various deities. After all that can be said concerning the testimony of the Apostles and primitive Christians, it will, in the minds of many, possess but little weight, because it is the testimony of friends: But we may with confidence defy any unbeliever to show wherein it could be better. Infidels now complain that the witnesses were interested; whereas, if the Apostles had not been convinced by what they saw, it would have been said, that they could not have been honest. We are authorized to make this statement from the fact, that one principal objection which they make to the truth of these miracles, clearly implies it. If these mir-

acles, it is said, were such as they were represented to be by the Apostles, every individual must have been persuaded to believe in the Saviour. They confidently affirm that their own unbelief would have vanished before them. Thus they cannot believe the testimony of these Apostles, because they were convinced by what they saw, and became the friends of the Saviour. They cannot believe that the miracles ascribed to him, were ever wrought by him; because every beholder must have been convinced of the truth and equity of his claims! It seems that no evidence whatever, can satisfy these men. If all that saw the miracles which were wrought by our Saviour had been persuaded to believe on him, *their* testimony would have been good for nothing, because they were interested. If any who saw these miracles, had remained unfriendly to the Saviour, *their* testimony would have been equally good for nothing, because they must have been dishonest.

But as arguments will avail nothing with these men, for the sake of such as mean to be influenced by evidence, we observe, that there was every thing in the case of the Apostles that ever operated to prevent the influence of evidence on the mind, to prevent their believing on the Saviour. They could expect nothing but shame, persecution, and death. But if through all this improper influence, evidence made its way to their hearts, at the hazard of every earthly interest, is their testimony any less deserving of our confidence? Let us bear in mind, that the Apostles were not alone. Notwithstanding the dangers to which they were exposed, the number of witnesses were constantly increasing. Hundreds and thousands who had every opportunity to know whether these miracles had been wrought, in the face of death, and that too, in its most appaling forms, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is now left for the reader to determine, whether the mira-

cles wrought in attestation of the religion of the Bible, be not supported with evidence as conclusive as the nature of the case could allow, or as any candid inquirer could desire.

Another argument differing but little from that to which we have now been attending, in proof that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, is the resurrection of Christ. This is not only one of the most important miracles recorded in the whole Bible, but it is accompanied with other circumstances which greatly strengthen the testimony by which it is supported. By looking at the history of the labours of Paul, it is obvious that there was no one argument on which he placed so much dependence while endeavouring to convince his hearers, as on that which is drawn from the resurrection of *Christ*. He often represented this as the principal point in debate. On one occasion he told his audience that it was for the hope of the resurrection, that he was called in question. On another, it is said, he was heard with attention, till he began to speak of the resurrection, upon which, some mocked, and others left him with the promise that they would hear him again. The Apostle Peter considered this article no less important, as may be seen by the introduction to his first Epistle: "Who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." *a* As the argument appears to us, we can conceive of but two evasions which can possibly be made to bear the least appearance of plausibility: The Apostles either combined together to palm on the world a deception; or they were deluded and led to believe what was without foundation; or the whole history is true. The first of these, we have already shown to be impossible. As they could hope for nothing from a lifeless corpse, there could be no object to induce them to meet all they must endure, if they persisted in testifying to what they knew was

a 1 Pet. i 3.

false. Besides, it has been shown, that they have given us every mark of honesty, that was within their power. That they could have been deceived, will appear, on examination, to be equally incredible. They were not so ignorant but that *they must know whether a body was dead or alive.* Besides, the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, stated that the Saviour had been, after his resurrection, seen of above five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom were then living. This not only shows that they were present and willing to appeal to known facts, but it shows with equal certainty, that if any collusion had existed among them, with the greatest ease, the whole might have been detected.

Again, there was a dead body; it was in the hands of enemies, and these enemies were apprised of the expectation of its friends that it would rise from the dead. But still, these enemies, although it was for their interest to detect every deception, have given no rational account of the body. For ought that appears from them, the body when in their own possession, has vanished out of existence. The account that is given by the Jews, which is supported by the testimony of men in a sound sleep, no rational mind can credit for a moment.

Another evidence, and one on which we, living at this distance from the time when the event occurred, can place still greater dependence, may be seen in the observance of certain ceremonies. These ceremonies were designed to perpetuate the event, by conveying the evidence down to posterity unimpaired. By keeping the first day of the week, as holy time, instead of the seventh, they have established a testimony which must remain unanswerable to the end of time.

Again, another evidence that the Scriptures are divine inspiration, may be obtained from the rapid spread of the gos-

pel. This will appear to best advantage, if we look at the embarrassments under which the Apostles laboured. They were poor and mostly illiterate; and they had to oppose the pride, the learning, the power, and the religion of the world. They could make no compromise with their enemies, as the religion which they inculcated, denounced every other as false and ruinous. They had nothing with which to flatter human nature, but a life of forbidding self-denial, that would most certainly be terminated upon the rack, or by the flames. Now what could they, under all these embarrassments, expect to do? Unless they could go forth and appeal to the miracles which had been wrought by the Saviour and his disciples, and to his resurrection as known facts without fear of contradiction, and unless they could rely on the influence of the Holy Spirit to render their labours effectual, how could they ever hope to make one prosolyte? Still it is a truth that cannot be questioned, that in spite of all these obstacles, this gospel, so unwelcome to the natural heart, spread with almost incredible rapidity. From the best accounts with which we are furnished, both from profane history, as well as from the Bible, it appears, that in less than thirty years from the ascension of our Lord, the gospel had spread itself throughout Judea, Gallilee and Samaria, almost throughout the numerous districts of lesser Asia—through Greece and the Islands of the Ægean Sea—the coast of Africa, and even to Rome. In most of these places, the converts were represented as numerous. Tertullian, who wrote about one hundred and fifty years after the ascension, appeals to the Governors of the Roman Empire in these terms: "We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns and boroughs; the camp, the Senate, and the Forum." Can the history of the world produce an instance in which a religion so unfriendly to the human heart, and under similar embarrassments, has spread with a rapidity like this?

Another evidence that the Scriptures were given by divine inspiration, may be drawn from the prophecies and their fulfilment. There is the same disposition in men of skeptical principles, to be satisfied with nothing, not even with their own prescriptions, concerning what kind of a prophecy with its fulfilment will amount to evidence; that we have already noticed in reference to the testimony of the disciples. The most common objection that is made to the argument that is derived from prophecies, is their obscurity or indistinctness. It is said, that it is an easy thing, where there is such a want of particularity, for a lively imagination, among the various events that are constantly occurring, to make an application of the prophecy that will exhibit some resemblance. On the other hand, some of the prophecies respecting our Saviour, were fulfilled in a manner so particular, we are told, that the Saviour made it his *aim* to fulfil them. While it will be seen to be impossible with any kind of prediction to satisfy such men, we cannot but admire the wisdom of God in allowing so much obscurity to rest upon the prophecies of the Bible, as to put out of the power of any impostor *designedly* to imitate them, and on the other hand, to have them written with so much particularity, that when the events foretold, do actually exist, the agreement between the prediction and the fulfilment, is such, as to render the application, at least in many instances, unquestionable. The prophecies which have already received their accomplishment are so numerous, that it will be impossible in this work, to give them a separate investigation. The only point, that we have room to examine, is whether we have not clear and unquestionable references in the Old Testament, to the person and character of the Saviour. In the 53d Chapter of Isaiah, we have a prediction concerning a person, who was to make his appearance, of whom, the following things are spoken: "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

and we hid as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in his mouth." We quote these verses merely as a specimen of the whole Chapter. It will be seen in this passage among many other things, the manner in which our Saviour was treated by the world, and how he was forsaken by his disciples; the meekness and patience with which he bore his sufferings, and the testimony of his judges, to his innocence. He should make his soul an offering for sin, and yet he should prolong his days. We would now ask whether it can be said of this prophecy, that it is loose and indefinite? Would not an infidel, if he were required to find another person in the history of the world to which this description would as literally apply as it does to Jesus of Nazareth, give up his task as a hopeless undertaking?

Again; "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah! though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth, who is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old even from everlasting." *a* This passage as it refers to the place where the Saviour was born, although it is one of the most definite prophecies in the whole Bible, cannot be considered as liable to the objection, that the fulfilment was intentional. On the part of the Saviour himself it can not be pretended; and on the part of his parents, it

a Micah v. 2.

may be remarked, that it was not a choice of their own, but a law of the government that brought them to Bethlehem. Concerning most of the prophecies which relate to our Saviour, we have an incontestible evidence, that this objection cannot be made to them. Their fulfilment was brought about by the agency of enemies. It was his enemies that led the Saviour to the judgment hall, pronounced him innocent, and yet condemned him. It was his enemies that put him to death, and "cast lots for his vesture."

The only objection that remains to be considered, is, that the prophecies were written after the events said to be predicted, had taken place. Through the kind providence of God, we are furnished with an argument, that proves this objection to be wholly without foundation, beyond the shadow of a remaining doubt. So far as these prophecies refer to the Saviour, the Jews would have been willing to have spared no pains, if they might either have been expunged from the Bible, or explained away; still, they stand precisely in their copies, as in ours. It cannot be supposed for a moment that the Jews would have allowed these prophecies to remain in their Scriptures, purporting to have been written several centuries before the events existed to which they refer, if it were possible to avoid it. The Jews in this case, as it has been often expressed, are our librarians, to whom we go for arguments, with which to oppose them. Aside from the fact, that it would be for their interest to deprive us of this testimony, their being allowed to remain in their copies, affords unquestionable evidence that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were written long before the time of our Saviour.

Now the prophecies we have examined, are only a few out of a multitude, that would afford us testimony on this point equally conclusive. Such as relate to the destruction of the cities of Nineveh, Tyre, and Babylon, and the dispersion of the Jews. The prophecies of our Saviour concerning the

destruction of Jerusalem, are unanswerable evidences, that to him, the veil of futurity was withdrawn. How is it possible to evade the conclusion to which we are conducted by this argument, that the Scriptures were given by the inspiration of God?

There are other arguments, such as the system of morals contained in the Bible, which infidels themselves acknowledge, is superior to any other in existence;—the apparent simplicity and honesty of the writers of the Bible, &c. from which we might derive additional support to the point before us, had we time to examine them. On the whole, it is believed, that the arguments to which we have already attended, cannot be examined with candour, without leaving an impression on the mind, that the Bible is the word of God, that will effect both the heart and the life.

Q. What is meant by inspiration?

A. By the best writers upon the subject, it is supposed to mean the following things:—1, *Superintendent inspiration;* by which they mean, that the writers were so far under the influence of the Divine Spirit, that the errours are less numerous, than if they had been left wholly to themselves.—2, *Plenary superintendent* inspiration; by which it is meant, that although the writer may be left in a measure, to the choice of his own style, yet the superintendence is such as to prevent any errour.—3, *Inspiration of suggestion;* by which we are to understand, that not only the sentiment, but the words themselves, are suggested to the mind of the writer.

Q. By which of these kinds of inspiration were the Scriptures given?

A. From the arguments to which we have attended, it is evident, that they were given by the two last. If the Scriptures are designed to be our guide and director, as we trust

has been fully proved, it is but rational to conclude, that it will be secured against any material errour. That some parts of the Bible, such as the prophecies, were written under the influence of the inspiration of suggestion, is evident from the fact, that the writers, while they might have had clear views of the symbols which were suggested to their minds, can scarcely be thought to have had a full view of all that was intended by them.

Q. Are there not some apparent contradictions in the Bible, such as the difference in the genealogies of our Saviour, which are given by Matthew and Luke, which go to prove that it could not have been written under a plenary superintendent direction?

A. As to the difference in those genealogies, they may be easily reconciled by supposing, that in one case, it is the genealogy of Joseph, and in the other, of Mary. Luke undoubtedly gives us the genealogy of our Saviour through the line of Mary; hence the Saviour is said by him to be the *supposed* son of Joseph. The father of Joseph, is by one called Jacob, and by the other, Heli; by which we are to understand, that as Heli was the father of Mary, Joseph was called his son. With regard to the other supposed contradictions contained in the Bible, it is necessary only to remark, that a candid examination of the meaning of the text, compared with the context, will not fail to remove every appearance of disagreement in sentiment. Besides, these apparent discrepances in the language of the Bible, prove to the satisfaction of every honest mind, that there could have been no collusion among its writers; and if the writers of the Bible were honest, we have seen that the question with regard to its inspiration, must be forever settled.

Q. Does not the Apostle Paul intimate that he gave some

directions to the church at Corinth, without the influence of the Divine Spirit? *a*

A. The Apostle meant his brethren should understand, that he had received from the Lord Jesus Christ, no particular command, on that subject. In the verse but one previous to that in question, he observes, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord." In the 25th verse of the Chapter, he mentions another case, concerning which he told his brethren, that he had not received any express command from the Saviour. It is then plain that in the 12th verse, by the expression, "So speak I, and not the Lord," he meant only to be understood, that, among all the commands and directions of our Lord, there was no one, exactly adapted to these cases, and not that he was under the influence of no kind of inspiration. Accordingly, in the last verse, when closing his remarks on this subject, he observes, "But I think I have the mind of the Spirit."

Q. What evidence have we that the Scriptures have not been corrupted, by incorrect translations, interpolations, and additions?

A. Soon after the Scriptures were collected into one volume, as might be expected from a knowledge of the human heart, the opinions of men on some of the most important points of it, became at variance. This difference of opinion has constantly and rapidly increased to the present day. These different sectaries have been a constant check upon each other. There is such a suspicion and jealousy among them toward each other, that we are unable to conjecture how Divine Providence could have placed the Scriptures, where they would have been more secure against every kind of corruption.

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a 1 Cor. vii 12.

Q. What evidence have we that *all the books* in the Bible, were given by inspiration?

A. As an evidence that the Bible must stand or fall as a whole, there are more than two hundred quotations from the Old Testament in the New, in which there are some from almost every book. But more conclusive evidence that the whole of the Bible, as we now have it, is inspiration, we gather from the testimony of the Apostles. Before his ascension, the Saviour promised his disciples that after his departure, the Holy Spirit should come, and should "guide them into all truth." *a* That this promise was fulfilled, is evident from the miracles which they wrought, and the success which attended their labours. Under this influence of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul declared, that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." *b* That the Apostles had in their possession, what is called the Septuagint, or the translation of the Old Testament by the seventy, and often used it, cannot be doubted by any who will take the pains to examine their quotations. Every book contained in the Old Testament as we now have it, is found in the Septuagint. The declaration of the Apostle, must be considered as amounting to the most decisive testimony, that every book in the Old Testament, is inspiration. But few who have any conscientious belief in Christianity, ever doubted the truth of any part of the New Testament, while it is not uncommon to hear doubts expressed with regard to the Songs of Solomon, Ruth, and some other books in the Old. But from what has been stated above, we have the Apostle Paul's authority, that these books stand upon equal ground with the rest.

2. Wherever the Saviour spake of the Old Testament, he

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a John xvi 13. *b* 2 Tim iii 16

called it the Scripture. *a* He must have referred to the Old Testament as including all the books which it now contains, because such were the Scriptures in possession of the Jews. We have not the faintest indication in all their opposition to the Saviour, that they ever complained of his rejecting a part of their Scriptures. The whole of the Old Testament, is what the Saviour calls, *the Scriptures*, and what he tells us "cannot be broken." *b* If then, any part of the Bible be true, the whole of it is true.

The reader is now left to determine for himself, whether this body of testimony in support of the Bible, can be met or disproved. Who can believe that such a number of testimonies, so different in their nature, could all harmoniously meet in the support of what is not true?

Paley's Evidences.—Doddridge's Lectures.—Campbell on Miracles.—Baron Haller.—Scripture Facts.—Owen on the Hebrews.—Chalmer's Evidences.—Boy'e's Lectures.—Leslie's Short Method.—Difficulties of Infidelity.

SECTION III.

Perfections of God.

Q. What are the attributes of God?

A. His attributes are usually divided into two classes—*natural* and *moral*. His natural attributes are, *Eternity, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omnipotence,* and *Omniscience.*

1. ETERNITY. That God is eternal, we are furnished with the most decisive evidence from the light of reason. We have found in our arguments in proof of his being, that he is

a Mark xii. 10 Luke iv. 21, John vii 38, 42. Mat. xxii. 29. *b* John x. 35.

the cause of every other existence. We are left then, to believe that he came into existence without a cause, or that he has existed without a beginning. The first of these suppositions is obviously impossible, as has been sufficiently shown. We have therefore, the same evidence that he has existed eternally, as that he exists now. In all our observations upon this subject, we are under the necessity of using terms, which are liable to leave incorrect impressions on the mind. *Our* mode of existence is successive, and it is extremely difficult for us to form any clear conceptions of any other. We may, however, be readily convinced, that to apply *our* mode of exietence to him, would be to represent him as increasing in age. Further, if he exist in succession, *to-day*, or this moment, must appear to him different from what it did yesterday, when he viewed it as future. If this be true, then he has one idea to-day which he did not possess yesterday—of course, he is constantly increasing in knowledge, and cannot be infinite. We must suppose, therefore, that to him, the past, present and future, are all perfectly alike. That he looks upon days, months and years, and on the beginning and end of time, as we look upon the divisions and subdivisions of a scale, when both ends are equally near us.

The Scriptures, though accommodated to our views and our conceptions, contain this view of the existence of God: "And God said unto Moses, *I am that I am*, and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I am*, hath sent me unto you." *a* Again, "Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity." *b* In this passage, God is represented as filling eternity, as he fills immensity. As he is present in all the regions of immensity at once, so he is equally present in all the periods that are past and all that are to come. *c*

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a Ex. iii 14. *b* Isa. lvii. 15. *c* 2 Pet. iii 8. Rev. xi. 17, and xvi 5.

Another of the natural attributes of the Deity is IMMUTABILITY. This is so obviously inferred from his eternity and his infinite wisdom, and is so often exhibited in the Bible, that in order to prove it, but few remarks will be necessary. Whatever is self existent and independent, is plainly unchangeable. But it is with still more certainty inferred from his infinite wisdom and power. On this point also, the Scriptures speak with plainness: "I am the Lord, I change not." *a* "With whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" *b*

Q. Is it not said in some passages of Scripture that God *repented*, which uniformly implies a change of mind?

A. It is said that "It repented the Lord, that he had made man." *c* The same sentiment is expressed in 1 Sam. xv. 11. *d* It has been observed, that in the *language* of the Scriptures, they are adapted to the capacities of men. The term *repent*, when applied to men, usually denotes a change of mind. This change of mind is inferred from an apparent change in their conduct. Hence it is said, where there is a visible change in the conduct of the Most High towards his creatures, that he repented. But this change of conduct, is not an evidence of a change of mind in him. In consequence of the change of character in *mankind* after they were created, the Almighty must of necessity, if he remained the same holy Being, exhibit toward them a change of conduct. So when we are told the sun stood still at the command of Joshua, *e* we discover the same accommodation to the capacity of man. It is the design of the Bible in these cases, to state facts *as they appeared*, and not according to philosophical accuracy. To suppose that God can ever change in his purposes or intentions, would set the Scriptures at war with themselves. "God is not man that he should repent." *f*

a Mal. iii. 6. *b* Job xxiii. 13. *c* Gen. vi. 6. *d* 1 Sam. xv. 11. *e* Josh. x. 13. *f* Num. xxiii. 19.

Another of the attributes of God, is OMNIPOTENCE. There is a strong presumption, if not conclusive evidence of this, from his *Eternity*. But an argument may be drawn from the work of creation, which must remove every doubt. If he be able to create worlds with all their inhabitants out of nothing, it is certain that we can form no conception of any deficiency in his power. If it should be objected, that we have no certain evidence but that the work of creation might have been accomplished by a being whose power was less than infinite, we would barely state in answer, that in proving the existence of God, (see page 15) it was demonstrated that the being from whom power originated must have been Almighty. But the testimony of Scripture will place this subject beyond a doubt: "I am the Almighty God." *a* "God Almighty bless thee." *b* "I am God Almighty." Declarations like these, are found in more than fifty different passages in the Bible. This is an attribute of so much importance in the character of God, for the security of his kingdom as a foundation of intire confidence in him, that it is represented as being a prominent sentiment in the song of heaven, that "The *Lord God Omnipotent* reigneth." *c*

God is OMNISCIENT. As he has created, and as he constantly upholds all beings, it follows of course, that he must know every thing concerning them. The wisdom, and design, that we discover in many of the works of God, must convince and satisfy the mind, that he is infinite in knowledge. Who can contemplate with the least attention the corporeal system of man, the operation of his mind, or the systems of worlds with which we are surrounded, without being convinced that he who made them is *Omniscient?* But the testimony of Scripture is still more explicit. "He is mighty

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a Gen xvii. 1. *b* Gen. xxviii. 3, and xxxv. 11. *c* Rev. xix 6.

in wisdom." *a* "He that is perfect in knowledge, is with thee." *b* "I know that no thought can be withholden from thee." *c* "Great is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite. Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men."

Another of the natural perfections of God, is OMNIPRESENCE. He is not confined to any one place in the universe. He doubtless makes different manifestations of himself to different characters, in different places. But, although it may be said that he is ever *with* his people, and that he *forsakes* the wicked, still in another sense, it is true, that if we ascend into heaven or make our bed in hell, or if we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, we are surrounded by him, and cannot escape his presence. *d* As he has created all things, for ought that we can see, all things must constantly depend on him. He must be every where, in order to support and preserve in existence the works of his hands. There is also, wherever we have any knowledge of existence, a constant agency to be discovered, which can be attributed to no other being. We may also readily see, that if he be not every where present, he cannot be infinite in knowledge. But it is needless to spend time in endeavouring to prove from the light of nature, that which is clearly and undeniably established in the Bible. "Am I a God at hand saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: Do I not fill heaven and earth?" *e* "The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." *f*

Q. What are the *moral* perfections of God?

A. They are *Benevolence, Justice, Truth, Mercy, &c.*

1. God is BENEVOLENT. Whatever arguments there may

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a Job xxxvi. v *b* ver 4. *c* Chap xlii. 2. Jer. xxxii. 19 Acts xv. 8 Ps cxxxix. 2 Rom. xi 38. *d* Ps. cxxxix. 1. *e* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. *f* 1 Kings viii. 27. Ps. cxxxix. 1—12.

be from the light of nature in proof of this, we can see no good reason for stating them or dwelling upon them, since it is a point on which the Scriptures speak with so much decision. They seem not contented merely with stating that God is good, but they represent his moral character as made up of benevolence. "God is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." *a* All his natural and moral perfections are entirely and harmoniously employed in executing plans of benevolence. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." *b*

2. God is JUST. It appears rational that a being, one of whose principal objects is to exhibit kindness and benevolence, must be a just being. We can form no conception how benevolence could exist without justice; neither could we have any rule, by which we might give it a due estimate. Justice, as the term is applied to the Deity, generally implies, that he will render to all beings their rights, according to an equitable and righteous scale. But what this scale is, by which the rights and the characters of beings are to be estimated, we have no knowledge till we look into the Scriptures. We not only have this standard clearly revealed in the Bible, but are assured that God is determined to support it. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, (said the Saviour,) I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." *c* "Just and right is he." *d* "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." *e* "A just God and a Saviour." *f* "A just weight and balance are the Lord's." *g*

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a 1 John iv. 16. *b* John iii 16. *c* Mat. v. 17, 18. *d* Deut. xxxii 4. *e* Rev. xv. iii. *f* Isa. xlv. 21. *g* Prov xvi 11.

Again he is a God of TRUTH. By the truth of God, we mean that his representations are invariably according to facts. That this is his character, we are not entirely without evidence from the light of reason. If he is a benevolent being, as we trust has already been sufficiently shown, he must be determined to promote the greatest possible happiness of his creatures. As truth is the foundation of all confidence, so it is impossible without it, for that reciprocal trust to exist, without which, society cannot be happy. The veracity of God, without the aid of revelation, can be seen only in the uniformity of his works and providences. It is said, with truth, that he speaks to the children of men by his works and ways. So far as the lesson which we may derive from these sources is uniform, so far we discover his truth. It cannot be denied, that we uniformly, whatever object we contemplate, receive an impression that God is wise and powerful. Neither can it be denied that the events of almost every hour tell us, that the happiness we derive from this world, was not the object for which we were created.

The testimony of Scripture upon this point, is plain and decisive. When God was pleased to proclaim unto Moses his name, he declared himself to be "Abundant in truth." *a* Again he is said to be "A God of truth." *b* "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." *c* "The paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." *d* "The Lord his God who keepeth truth forever." *e* "It is impossible for God to lie." *f* This attribute of Jehovah, we can never seriously contemplate but with the deepest interest. It secures the fulfilment of every promise and every threatening contained in the Bible.

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a Ex. xxxiv. 6. *b* Deut. xxxii. 4. *c* Ps. xxxi. 5. *d* Ps. xxv. 10. *e* cxlvi. 6 *f* Heb. vi. 18.

Another of the perfections of God, is MERCY. This, we have in substance, already proved. We have shown that God is benevolent, and mercy is one of the various ways by which benevolence is exhibited. By mercy we are to understand kindness bestowed on such as are unworthy. The existence of mercy supposes guilt or unworthiness, and this supposes a rule of justice by which men are estimated and condemned. In dealing better with mankind than they deserve, God is constantly manifesting his mercy. In continuing our lives, when by his law, we are under the sentence of condemnation, affords a conclusive evidence that he is merciful. The whole system of salvation as revealed in the Bible, is only one infinitely glorious plan, for the exhibition of mercy. He is the "Lord God merciful and gracious." *a* The passages which speak of the mercy of God, are so numerous, it is useless to cite them. *b*

There are other displays which God is pleased to make of himself, which, by some writers, are called perfections, which are in truth, but varying exhibitions of such as have been already mentioned; such as *holiness*, by which we mean his hatred and opposition to sin; and *wisdom*, by which is meant the choice of good ends and well-adapted means for their accomplishment. In view of all the perfections of God, as seen by the light of nature and of revelation, are we not constrained to acknowledge, that, as a being to govern the world, to inspire the most unshaken confidence, and to form by an exhibition of his own nature, a theme for eternal admiration and praise, it is impossible for us to discover the least defect in his character?

Doddridge's Lectures.—Hopkins' System.—Dwight's Theology.

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a Ex. xxxiv. 6. *b* Ps cxxxvi. 26.

SECTION IV.

Unity of God, Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Q. What evidence have we, that there is but one God?

A. It is evident from the unity of design, that we discover in all his works. From the uniformity of the laws of nature it is certain, that if there be more than one, they act in perfect concert, and it is impossible to form any conception of two infinite beings, which, in every respect, are exactly alike. If they are in any respect unlike, both cannot be infinite; but if they are in every conceivable particular alike, it will follow, that they are but one. But this point is decided in the Scriptures beyond a question. The Divine Unity is unequivocally established, and the worship of more than one God is expressly condemned. The Creator of the world is represented as one Agent. But the proposition is still more unequivocally supported by direct passages of Scripture. "The Lord our God is one Lord." *a* "I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God." *b* "There is none other God but one." *c*

Q. What are we to understand by the doctrine of the Trinity?

A. It is not meant that God is three in the same sense, as that in which he is one; but that there is a mysterious distinction between what are called the *persons* in the Godhead, which renders the use of the pronouns *I*, *thou*, and *he*, in addressing each other, just and proper.

Q. What do we understand by the word *person*, as it is used in reference to this subject?

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a Deut. vi. 4. *b* Is. xliv. 6. *c* 1 Cor. viii 4.

A. Not the same as *being*, which is the usual meaning of the word when applied to other subjects, but to denote that distinction which exists, as we have observed, in the Godhead. As we do not attempt to define that distinction, but only to prove that it is supported in Scripture, neither do we attempt to show the precise meaning of the word *person* when applied to it.

Q. What evidence have we that this distinction exists?

A. As this is a question about which we should have no knowledge were it not for the Bible, so in our investigation of it, the Bible must be our sole dependence.

1. God is spoken of in many passages in the Bible, both in the singular and plural numbers. "And God said, let *us* make man in *our* own image after *our* likeness." *a* "And the Lord God said behold the man has become as one of *us* to know good and evil." *b* "Go to, let *us* go down and confound their language." *c* There are other passages in which the word that stands for God, in the Hebrew is in the plural, which in the translation is rendered in the singular number. *g*

2. It is evident from the use of the pronouns *I*, *thou*, and *he*, to which we have already alluded. "The Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." *d* "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," and again, "I will be unto him a father and he shall be to me a son." *e* "But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." *f*

3. That there are three persons in the Godhead, is evident from the form, in which baptism is administered. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptising them into the name

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a Gen. i. 26. *b* iii. 22. *c* xi. 7. *g* Gen i. 1. Is. liv. 5. Eccl. xii. 1. *d* Ps. ii. 7. *e* Heb. i. 5. *f* Heb. i. 8.

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *a* By this passage it must be plain, that the distinction in the Godhead must be something more than a distinction in different offices. We can scarcely conceive of a direction more unmeaning, than a command to baptize in the name of an office. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."*

Q. What evidence have we that Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity, is the true God?

A. 1. He is called by the *names* of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God: The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made." *b* That the *Word*, which in this passage, is said to be God, is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ, is evident from the 14th verse of the same chapter. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." But unto the Son he saith, (that is, God the Father saith) "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." *c* "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." *d* He is called the true God. "This is the true God and eternal life." *e* He is called the "Mighty God."

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* This passage it is well known, has been thought by some learned and orthodox divines, to be spurious. Dr. Middleton has employed no less than ten pages of his work in attempting to prove that it is not genuine; (See Greek Article, page 312) After all, the opinion of Dr. Scott, to the mind of the candid reader, will appear the most rational. It is more likely that this passage in the heat of controversy, has been left out (as it is wanting in some copies) by the Arians, than that it was ever forged and inserted by the orthodox. One argument in proof of this of no small weight, is the fact that in the fourth century, in their zeal to disprove the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, they expunged John iv 24 from the Bible — That *this* passage is genuine, is not questioned at the present day, and yet that it was expunged we have the testimony of Ambrose. (Milner. Armstrong's edition, Vol II p. 169)

a Matt. xxviii, 19. *b* John i, 1—3 *c* Heb. i, 8 *d* Acts xx, 28 *e* 1 John v, 16.

"Unto us, a child is born, and his name shall be called the Mighty God." *a* He is called the only wise God. "To the only wise God our Saviour." *b* He is called "God over all," "Of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came who is over all blessed forever." *c* He is called *Lord* of *all*. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, He is *Lord* of *all*" *d* He is called the Lord of Hosts. "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." *e* The Apostle John says, that the prophet made this remark in view of the glory of Christ. *f* He is called the *first* and the *last*. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, *the first and the last*." *g* Lastly, he is called Jehovah. "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord (or Jehovah) our righteousness." *h*

2. As another evidence that Jesus Christ is the true God, all the *attributes* of God are ascribed to him. He is represented as *Omniscient*. "Peter said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things." *i* He was perfectly acquainted with the hearts of men. *k* He is possessed of *Omnipotence*. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come the Almighty." *l* That thisdeclaration was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be satisfied beyond a doubt, if we look at the 17th & 18th verses of the same chapter. "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and am he that liveth and was dead." *m*

He is *Omnipresent*. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." *n*

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a Isa ix 6. *b* Jude 25 *c* Rom. ix, 5 *d* Acts x. 36. *e* Isa vi, 5. *f* John xii 41. *g* Rev i. 11, and xxii. 13, compared with Isaiah xliv 6. *h* Jer. xxiii, 5, 6. *i* John xxi. 17. *k* Mat. ix. 4, and xii, 25—Luke v, 22 *l* Rev. i. 8. *m* Rev i, 18 *n* Mat. xviii, 20, xxviii, 20.

There are other passages, such as Heb. i. 3, where he is represented as "Upholding all things by the word of his power," from which it may be clearly inferred, that he is every where present. But these are sufficient It is impossible to conjecture how he may be in the midst of every worshipping assembly, and accompany every minister of the gospel unto the end of the world, unless he is Omnipresent.

He is *eternal.* This is plain from many expressions which we have already quoted, such as the following: "I am the first and the last." If he were the first, none could have been before him. If he be the last, none can be after him. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." *a* He is said in this passage to be co-existent with the Father. He is *before* all things, and by him all things exist *b*

He is *Immutable.* "Jesus Christ, the sameyesterday, today, and forever." *c*

3. The *works* of God are ascribed to Christ.

1. "All things were made by him and without him was not any thing made that was made, and the world was made by him." *d* "By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible,—all things were created by him and for him." *e* "By whom are all things, and we by him." *f* "And thou Lord in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands." *g* Here we have the testimony of the Father, that the foundations of the earth were laid by the Son, and that the heavens are the work of his hands. But it is the work of God to create: therefore he must be God.

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a John i, 1 *b* Col. i, 17 *c* Heb. xiii, 8, *d* John i, 3, 10 *e* Col. i, 16, 17 *f* 1 Cor. viii 6 *g* Heb. i, 10, 11

2. He preserves and upholds all things. "Who upholdeth all things by the word of his power." *a* "By him all things consist." *b* This also, is the work of God—"Thou hast made the heaven of heavens, the earth, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all." *c*

3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Governour of all things. "But unto the Son he saith, thy throne O God is forever and ever." *d* "And I saw in the night vision, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven; And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him,—his dominion is an everlasting dominion." *e* "Who is over all, God blessed forever." *f*

4. The Lord Jesus Christ will *judge the world.* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." *g* "The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom." *h* For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." *i* These are but a small part of the passages which speak decisively on this point. But it is said with equal decision, that God, and he only, is to judge the world. *k*

5. The Lord Jesus Christ forgives sins. "Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Saviour knowing that the Scribes for this declaration accused him of blasphemy, inquired of them whether it was "Easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say arise and walk?" He then observes, "That ye may know, that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed and go into thine house." *l* But if

a Heb i, 3 *b* Col i, 17 *c* Neh. ix. 6. *d* Heb i, 8 *e* Dan vii. 13, 14 *f* Rom ix, 5. *g* 2 Cor v, 10. *h* 2 Tim iv, 1. *i* Rom xiv 10, and Mat xxv, 31,—46, and John v. 22, and Acts x, 42, and xvii, 31. *k* Ps. xcvi, 13 Rev xx, 12, 13 *l* Mat ix, 2, 6

every sin that is committed is against God, it is obvious in addition to all that is said in the Scriptures, that it can be forgiven by no other being in the universe but by him.

6. The Lord Jesus Christ has *claimed* to be *equal* with God. "Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." The Saviour, instead of denying this charge, tells them that "All men should know the Son even as they know the Father." *a* "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." *b* How can we explain these passages without impeaching the veracity of the Saviour, unless we admit that he is the true God?

7. Our Saviour was, while on earth, and ever will remain, the object of divine worship. The Saviour himself taught, as we have just seen, that "All men ought to honor him even as they honor the Father." When he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, "They worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." The passages which assure us that divine worship was paid to the Redeemer, without exciting on his part a single objection, are too numerous to be repeated. *c* That to render homage and worship to the Lord Jesus Christ, was not a mistake into which *men* were led through ignorance, we have certainly very high authority. "When he bringeth the first begotten into the world he saith, let all the angels of God worship him." *d* Here is an explicit command from the Father, that angels shall unite in the worship of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. That worship is paid to him in heaven, the most pure and humble which heaven itself can admit, is established in the Revelation of St. John, beyond a doubt. *e* Now all

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a John v. 18. 23 *b* Phil. ii, 6 *c* See Mat xxviii 17—Luke xv, 25, xviii, 26—Mark v, 6, xv, 19—John xx, 28 *d* Heb i, 6 *e* Rev v, 6, 13 and 7 x, 14, and xv, 3

this worship, unless the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, can be nothing but idolatry. Idolaters, we are assured, shall "not inherit the kingdom of God." And we are told also, that they "Shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." But as odious as this sin appears in the sight of God, and as dangerous as it is to the soul, unless the doctrine for which we are contending is true, the whole current of Scripture is directly calculated to lead us into it.

We have shown that the titles and names of God—that the attributes and works of God, are ascribed in a great portion of the Bible, to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have shown that he has the prerogatives of God, and has himself claimed to be equal with God. We have shown that he has received divine homage, and will receive it in the future world, to eternal ages. Such as are not convinced by these arguments, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, who mean to put implicit faith in the truth of the Scriptures, we are strongly inclined to ask, with what terms could a proposition be formed that would be acknowledged as conclusive proof? If clear and unequivocal ascriptions of all the names, attributes works, and prerogatives of the eternal Jehovah, to the second person in the Trinity, will not prove that he is God, we acknowledge that if we were requested to form a proposition that would do it, we should give up the undertaking as hopeless.

Q. Are there not some passages in which our Saviour is represented both by himself and the Apostles as inferiour to the Father?

A. It is readily admitted that in some passages, the Saviour represents himself as being unable to do any thing without the Father. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself." And again, "I can of myself do

nothing." *a* We also admit that the Saviour declares himself to be ignorant of the time when Jerusalem should be destroyed, and that it was known only to the Father. In accordance with this, it is said by the Apostle, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, and when all things shall be subdued unto him; then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." *b* The answer we would give to the objection grounded upon these passages is this: They are such representations as we should expect to find from our views of the Saviour's character. If he be really *man* as well as God, as we certainly must believe, and if, as Mediator, a kingdom is committed to him by the Father, we ought to expect to meet with representations, indicative of this *subjection* and *inferiority*. That the Saviour possesses this two-fold character, we willingly admit; and we challenge our opponents to give us a fair and candid explanation of the two numerous classes of passages which speak of his humanity and divinity, upon any other principle. The passage last mentioned from the Apostle Paul, is one on which, the opposers of the doctrine for which we are contending, place their chief dependence; and yet to such as mean to abide by the decision of Scripture, it must appear plain, that he meant to assert nothing inconsistent with the divinity of Christ. If there be a phrase in this passage that has such a complexion, it is this: "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." This same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, tells us expressly, that *Christ* is *all* and *in all*.

That this connexion between the human and divine na-

a John v, 19, 30—Mark xiii, 31 *b* 1 Cor. v, 24, 28.

tures of Jesus Christ is mysterious, we are not backward to acknowledge, since it has been cheerfully acknowledged before us, by an inspired Apostle. "For without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh." *a* But that there is any thing in the doctrine manifestly absurd, or repugnant to reason, we deny.

There seems to be a presumption on the minds of some persons, that the doctrine contains a supposition that is impossible. But can it be proved by reason, that the Spirit of God cannot be located, as far as the term is proper in reference to the Supreme Divinity, in a body like ours? And is it impossible that a voice should proceed from that body, to which the elements should be obedient? Is this more difficult to conceive, than that a similar voice should proceed from a cloud, as in the case of Moses, or from a whirlwind, as in the case of Job? By this connexion of human and divine natures in the person of the Son, our world is furnished with a divine example. We see the temper, or Spirit of him, whose operations we discover in every motion of the wind, and whose voice we hear in the storm and thunder.

But another, and if possible a more glorious object is accomplished by this connexion; a character is formed, whose sufferings as a sacrifice, are infinitely meritorious. Did our Lord Jesus Christ possess none but a divine nature, we cannot conceive how he could suffer. Were he nothing but a man, we cannot conceive how his sufferings should make such a declaration of the righteousness of God, that he might be just, when he justifies the sinner that believes.

Q. What evidence have we of the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost?

A. Although the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit is more often disputed than his divinity, we see no justifiable

a 1 Tim. i, 16

reasons for disputing either. The most plausible hypothesis, which is suggested by those who deny the personality of the Spirit, is that the term implies nothing but an *attribute* of God. They generally suppose it to be the *power* of God; but the arguments which we shall advance to show that this hypothesis is false, will be equally decisive against supposing it to be any other attribute.

1. This hypothesis renders the Scriptures wholly unintelligible. *Power* is frequently represented as an attribute of the Holy Ghost. "That ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." *a* Now if we insert the power of God, in the room of the Holy Ghost, in this passage, it will render the passage wholly unmeaning. 'That ye may abound in hope, through the power of the power of God.' The same may be said of the following passage: "How God anointed Jesus Christ of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." *b* And also of another passage in the chapter before quoted, "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." *c* It must readily recur to the mind of every reader, that passages like these, are numerous in the Bible. From this single suggestion, it must be apparent, that the term Holy Ghost, cannot mean the power of God.

2. If the Holy Spirit be nothing but an attribute, we can form no conception, why blasphemy against it should be unpardonable. If we suppose it to be an agent, by which the sinner is convicted and led to Christ, the account will appear rational. But on the other supposition, why blasphemy against the power or wisdom of God should be so much worse than blasphemy against his love, holiness, truth or mercy, it is impossible to conjecture.

3. It is evident that the Holy Ghost is a distinct person

a Rom. xv, 13 *b* Acts x, 38 *c* Rom. xv, 19

from the manner in which he is united to the other persons, in the baptismal service. "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *a* It has been already observed, that it would be absurd to suppose, that this rite is to be applied in the name of an attribute. We may here observe in addition, that the absurdity is still more apparent, if we remember that this attribute is connected with the two other persons in the Trinity. Baptism would in that case be administered in the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of an attribute of God.

4. That the Holy Spirit is a distinct agent, and of course a distinct person, is plain from the *actions* which are ascribed to him. He is said to move—to know—to guide—to lead—to testify—reveal—search—prophesy—intercede—give gifts—to work in the soul of man—to work miracles—sanctify—to be pleased—vexed—grieved, &c. We certainly need spend no time to show, that if all these actions can be ascribed to an attribute, the Bible will constantly mislead the honest reader.

Q. What evidence have we that the Holy Spirit is the true God?

A. As our arguments in proving this point, from the nature of things, must be similar to those with which we have already proved the divinity of Christ, in our remarks upon it, we shall be very brief.

1. The names of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." *b* "Now the Lord is that Spirit." *c* "Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" *d*

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a Mat. xxviii, 19 *b* Acts v, 31 *c* 2 Cor iii, 17 *d* 1 Cor iii, 16—See vi, 19

2. The perfections of God are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He is said to be the *eternal* Spirit. "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." *a*

3. He is said to be *Omniscient*. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." *b*

4. He is *Omnipresent*. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" *c*

2. The works of God are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

1. The work of creation is ascribed to him. "By his Spirit he garnished the heavens. The Spirit of God hath made me." *d*

2. The Scriptures are said to be given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." They are also said to be given by the inspiration of God. *e*

3. The work of regeneration is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. *f* But regeneration is said also to be the work of God. *g* These passages, it is presumed, with all who mean not to dictate the word of God, but to submit in *all* the articles of their faith to its decisions, will appear abundantly sufficient to establish the Deity of the Holy Spirit beyond a doubt.

Jones on the Trinity.—Wardlow.—Dwight's Theology.—Stuart's Letters to Channing.

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a Heb ix 14 *b* 1 Cor ii, 10 *c* Ps cxxxix, 7—John xiv, 17—Neh ix, 20 *d* Job xxvi, 13 xxxiii, 4 *e* 2 Pet i, 21—2 Tim iii, 16 *f* John iii, 3, 6, 8—Tit iii, 5 *g* John i, 13—1 John iii, 9 iv, 7

SECTION V.

Universal Government of God.

Q. 1. What are we to understand by the *universal government* of God?

A. That universal and infinitely wise arrangement, and effectual control of every event, by which, he will secure his own glory, and promote the greatest possible good of the universe.

Q. 2. What evidence have we that God does overrule every event, so as eventually to promote the best interests of the universe?

A. This evidence arises from a view of his perfections, and the testimony of the Bible. We are aware, that no doctrine in the whole compass of theology, has excited a more bitter and violent hostility than this; and that in every attempt to defend it, we have to combat the most unreasonable prejudices:* Still, as the evidence by which it is supported, is little if any less certain than mathematical demonstration, we are bound to believe it, and treat it as the truth of God. It is presumed that all who believe in the existence of God, will cheerfully concede to the views which we have given of his perfections.

1. The first argument we shall mention in proof of this doctrine, is grounded upon these perfections. If the great Jehovah is infinite in wisdom, it is certain that he must *know* what events it is best on the whole should exist. If he be infinite in power, it is certain that he is able to *produce* every such event, and to prevent the existence of every other. If

* The reader is requested to suspend his decisions upon this subject, till he has candidly examined the answers that are given to the objections.

he be infinite in benevolence, he will as certainly *desire* the existence of such events and such only. How is it possible to evade this conclusion, and not impeach some one of these perfections? Should he not choose to have those events, and those only, brought into existence, which would on the whole, promote the greatest good, would he not be deficient in *goodness?* Should he choose this, and not be able to effect it, would he not be deficient in *power?* Should he accomplish what he *supposed* would effect it, and it should prove that he had not succeeded, would it not prove him deficient in *wisdom?* There is another method frequently adopted by the friends of this doctrine, of applying in substance, the same argument. It is stated thus; with regard to the existence of every event, God must have been willing, or unwilling, or indifferent. To suppose that he can be indifferent, especially about the existence of those events, which are of a moral nature, is impossible. It would represent him as indifferent to the interests of his kingdom. About events, which are not of a moral nature, there can be no controversy. There can be no inducement to oppose the doctrine of divine purposes, only in reference to moral actions. About such events, it is presumed, that no one will affirm that God is indifferent. Our next inquiry is, can it be supposed with regard to any event, that he was *unwilling* it should exist? If *on the whole*, he was unwilling, it is certain as we have already seen, that he must have been deficient in *power*. But if he were neither *indifferent* nor *unwilling*, the other supposition must be true, that he must have willed the existence of every event. Wherein is the conclusion, from this argument, in either of its forms, less certain than demonstration? Is it not plain, that, if we deny that the government of Jehovah, extends to every event, we sacrifice his character?

2. There is a connexion existing between events, which

renders it absurd to suppose that some are determined, and others not. It is presumed, that the person cannot be found, who would seriously affirm, that God has determined the existence of no events. Such events as the birth and death of the Saviour, it will doubtless be acknowledged by all, were determined before the world began. But on how many other circumstances, does such an event as the death of Christ, evidently depend? Or, in other words, with how many others is this event connected? In order that Christ should be put to death, he must be betrayed; there must be such a character as Judas; he must be tempted with thirty pieces of silver, &c. Now all the events connected with the life of Judas, from the time of his birth to the time when he betrayed his Master, had an influence in forming his character. Shall we then say, that God had determined that his Son should be put to death, and the time when it should be done, but had determined nothing about the means by which it was to be effected? I trust that the bare statement of this question is sufficient to show, that if the death of Christ was determined, the determination could not have been accomplished, unless the other events with which it is connected, and which involve the moral conduct of men, had been also determined.

It is acknowledged also, by all who believe the Bible, that in every event which is conducive to the prosperity of truth and righteousness in the world, God has an agency. If this be not true, then the kingdom of God is promoted without his assistance. But are not events so connected and interwoven, as to render it impossible that all such events should be determined and no others? Besides, it is an undoubted truth, that *some* at least, of the vilest conduct of which mankind were ever guilty, has been overruled to the promotion of good; such as the conduct of Joseph's brethren, and that of the Jews in the death of Christ. Now all the agency

which God has exerted in controlling these events, it must be acknowledged, if he be immutable, he had *always determined* to exert. Did he determine to control events, in the existence of which, he had neither choice nor influence? If so, there are many events independent of God; and if this be asserted, we are deprived of all proof of his existence. It can be no more difficult to account for the existence of *all* events, without a God, than for the existence of a part. But if it be acknowledged that he has some kind of agency in the existence of every event, it must also be acknowledged that he has determined the whole of his own actions. The conclusion is unavoidable, that the purposes of God extend to every event.

3. The same point is undeniably established by the Scriptures. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." *a* "The Lord hath made all things for himself" *b* "I am God and there is none like me declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying my counsel shall stand and, I will do all my pleasure." *c*

Again, the Scriptures so explicitly assert that such events as death, and the day of judgment, are determined of God, that no believer in the Bible will dispute it. But these depend on innumerable other events, which of course are in the plan of God; which at the same time, are of a moral nature. The unavoidable result of this reasoning is, that if some events are determined of God, the whole are, and every prophecy in the Bible, is of course a proof of the point in debate. But if argument will convince, it is believed that enough has been exhibited to satisfy every honest and inquiring mind.

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a Eph i, 11 *b* Prov xvi, 4 *c* Isa xlvi, 10

Q. 3. Does not this doctrine destroy the free agency of men?

A. As this is one of the most plausible, as well as most common objections, we shall endeavour to show, both from reason and from Scripture, that it is wholly without foundation. In what way is it pretended that this doctrine destroys the agency of man? It is presumed that those, who urge the objection, have no notion nor idea, that it is done in any other way, than by rendering our actions *certain*. The general question that we hear upon this subject is, if it be previously certain what course I shall take, how can I be free? It seems indeed to be taken for granted, that certainty cannot be consistent with freedom. We would then ask, whether it is possible to conceive, that God is able to create a being, if it were his intention, who should be dependent on him for existence and support, whose actions at the same time, might be free? To this question there can be but one answer. No one, it is presumed, would be willing to say, that to create a free agent, is what the Almighty cannot do. And if created and dependent beings cannot be free, the dispute is at an end; for men were created, and if mankind are not free, their agency cannot be destroyed by the decree of God. It must then be admitted, that God is able to create a being whose actions may be perfectly voluntary. Now suppose, that God should possess such a knowledge of causes and of their operations, as to *know infallibly*, how this being would act, in every circumstance in which he should be placed. Is the agency of this being injured by this knowledge? It has no possible influence upon his actions, and of course his agency cannot be affected by it. Besides, if the mere existence of this knowledge would destroy his free agency, it must follow that God cannot be free. His actions are certainly known to himself. The conclusion is unavoidable, that a being may

be free, when his actions are all known to God. Since nothing can be more certain than the *knowledge* of God, it follows that *certainty may be consistent with free agency*.

We shall now proceed to show, that certainty *must* be consistent with free agency. This is proved by one argument already advanced. It will not be disputed, but that God has a perfect knowledge of all the actions of men. We must then, either deny that men are free in their actions, or admit that *necessity*, or previous certainty, *must* be consistent with agency.

Again, if we look at the operations of the mind in choosing, we shall see that the very causes, that render our actions certain, render them free. In every instance of choice, in preferring that object which the mind judges to be most valuable, consists the freedom of our actions. But if the mind be influenced invariably by the strongest motive, then it is certain in the nature of things, previous to every choice, how it will terminate. So long as it is wholly uncertain with the mind in any given case, how it will decide, though the mind may be said in that case, to be free to *choose*, it is certainly not free *in choosing*. With such a freedom of choice a man might remain forever, without a free act. So long as the mind is undecided or indifferent, it will not act. If we contend, that as soon as the mind is inclined toward the one or the other side of the question, it is no longer free, then it is certain that there is no such thing as freedom of choice. To illustrate this point, suppose that three men are required to perform a deed of charity, which cannot be done without something of a sacrifice: They had been before, repeatedly tried in similar cases: The first had never complied: The second had complied at times, but with reluctance: The third had never failed, when an opportunity presented.—When the requirement is made known, the first remains without deciding; the second, after a season of suspense, reluctantly con-

sents to perform it; but the third, determines with cheerfulness to do it as soon as the request is heard. Now, was it not, previous to the trial, more certain that the third would comply with the request, than either of the others? And will not every person acknowledge, that of the three he acted the most freely? If that choice which was previously most certain, was still the most free, then *certainty is essential* to freedom.

From the very nature of the divine character, it is certain that God will always do right. Shall we say that he is not free?

Is it not certain that the devil will always do that which is wrong? If he be not free, how can he be blamed?

3. We shall now attempt to show that the Scriptures establish the point in question beyond all dispute.

It will be readily seen, that in every prophecy, which is descriptive of the future conduct of men, this point is unequivocally established. This conduct could not have been predicted, had it not been known, and *certain*. It could not have been criminal, or praiseworthy, had it not been free. It will not be denied but that the crucifixion and death of Christ, were predicted centuries before they took place. Still it is said that he was crucified with *wicked hands*. *a* Our Saviour foretold that Peter would deny him. *b* Neither the Saviour nor Peter ever gave the least intimation but that he was free. The greater part of those writings, which are called the prophets, which extend from the beginning of Isaiah to the end of Malachi, is made up of predictions, descriptive of the conduct of men. What is the book of Revelation but a chain of prophecies, in which the conduct of nations and individuals, is minutely foretold? And what can be said of the prophecies of the Apostles, concerning the apostacies of

a Acts ii. xxiii. *b* Luke xxii. 34.

the latter days? That these apostacies were previously certain, cannot be doubted. That they were represented as vile in the sight of God, is equally certain. Is it not then obvious, that if men cannot be free when their conduct is previously certain, no dependence can be placed upon the Bible? We trust, however, that we have shown that certainty is not only consistent with freedom of choice, but that without it, we cannot be free. This objection then, against the doctrine of God's universal government, that it destroys the agency of men, is plainly without foundation.

Q. 4. If all events are in the purposes of God, then he has determined the existence of sin; and if so, is it not evident that he is pleased with its nature?

A. By no means; such a conclusion would be equally at war with the Bible, and with the plainest dictates of common sense. Nothing could be more evident, than that God was willing *on the whole*, that his Son should be put to death. For this purpose he was sent into the world. Now shall we conclude that this event in its nature, was pleasing to God? God was willing that the inhabitants of the old world, of Sodom, and Gomorrah, should be destroyed, or he would never have sent destruction upon them. But who will say that he was pleased with the nature of those events? He sends afflictions upon his people, but he declares he does not afflict them willingly. Because a parent considers that the good of his child, and the welfare of his family require that his child should be corrected, to infer that he is pleased with such an event, in itself, would not only be a strange and irrational inference, but would be doing great injustice to the motives of the parent. From these remarks, it is believed the reader must see, that an event may be pleasing in itself, and displeasing when connected with other things; and on the contrary, it may be displeasing in itself, and pleasing when connected with other things.

Q. 5. Does not this doctrine represent the great Jehovah as insincere? Does it not represent him as inviting and commanding men to do one thing, when he is determined that they shall do another?

A. 1. It is no more difficult to meet this objection, for those who support the doctrine of decrees, than for those who believe in the absolute foreknowledge of God. If God has created and upheld beings, when he knew with unfailing certainty, that they would violate his law, it would be impossible to convince any reflecting and unbiassed mind, that he was not willing *on the whole*, that in these instances it should be violated. If he were not *on the whole* willing, it was not in his power to prevent it. This objection then must bear as heavily upon all who believe in the Bible and in the perfect knowledge of God, as on those who advocate the doctrine of decrees.

2. That God has determined the conduct of men in some instances, when it was in opposition to his commands, and that it is consistent with the purity and holiness of his character, must appear evident from the following facts: He determined that the Saviour should be put to death; *a* still it was a direct violation of his command. He commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son; *b* and yet, the event showed, that he had determined it should not be done. He commanded Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go; but he declares that he hardened his heart to prevent it. *c*

3. We shall now attempt to show, that if the determinations of God do extend to the volitions of wicked men, his character remains unimpeached.

1, This is evident from what we have already observed. Surely no one will contend, that it would be just for God *on the whole*, to be willing that certain events should exist, and wrong for him to determine their existence.

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a Acts iv. 27, 28.—Rev. xiii. 8. *b* Gen. xxii. 1—14. *c* Ex. viii. 20, 32, and xi. 10.

2. To illustrate this point still further, let us suppose a being to exist, who has all the faculties of a moral agent.—He is placed in circumstances, where obedience, and disobedience, and their different consequences are entirely at his option.—Without the least influence from any other being, he chooses the path of disobedience. Now suppose that Deity has knowledge sufficient to see with clearness every act through his whole life; that he sees also how he may overrule the whole of his conduct, so as to promote his own glory.—Is this agent in any way injured, or his agency impaired by this knowledge? or is it unjust for God to take the advantage of his conduct, to execute designs of benevolence? To these questions, so long as the agent suffers no foreign or compulsive influence, there can be but one answer. That such a line of conduct, as that which the sinner would naturally choose, would not be of all others the best, taking every thing into view, to be overruled for the promotion of infinitely wise purposes, is more than men or angels *can know*. Besides, we may readily believe that some important purposes might be accomplished in a kingdom as extensive as the kingdom of Jehovah, by having it known to what conduct a spirit of rebellion would lead, and what conduct the wisdom of God can so overrule as to promote his infinitely benevolent designs. But granting further, granting all that can be required in this case, that God does, by placing motives before the mind in his providence, lead men to *different* acts of wickedness, from what they would otherwise have committed, we shall now undertake to prove, that it does not reflect the least impropriety or injustice upon his character.

Upon every fair and honourable principle of reasoning, nothing more can be required of us than to produce facts and arguments, which obviously support our statements. To show *how* God can operate on the minds of men, so as to di

rect or control their actions without impairing their agency, is what we are no more required to show, than *how* the saint can be free when the Spirit of God operates upon him, or *how* he can enable the mind to operate on the body, or *how* he can enable us to see, or hear, or think. But, lest this should be thought an evasion, we shall attempt to do more than in fairness can be required of us; we shall attempt to show how the Deity *may* overrule the wicked conduct of men, consistently with the purity and holiness of his character. But while we proceed to show how he *may* do it, the reader is requested to bear in mind, that we do not pledge ourselves to describe precisely his manner of doing it; for this it will be perceived no one could safely pretend to do, unless he were his equal in wisdom. Let us resume the supposition we have already made:

1, That the sinner is free in the strictest sense of the word; and that the great Jehovah, by so disposing of motives in his providence, should lead him to *different* acts of sin than he would otherwise have committed, but which, while they are *no more guilty*, may be better overruled for the accomplishment of benevolent designs, can it be said that any injustice is done to the sinner; or that God has done any thing unworthy of his character? While the sinner is not injured, all that God has done is a display of benevolence and wisdom.

2. If the divine influence be so exerted as to *restrain* the sinner, and thus render his criminality less than it would otherwise have been, it cannot be said that his agency is injured, or that he is treated unjustly. If men cannot be restrained without having their agency impaired, what shall we say of the influence of the precepts, penalties, and threatenings of the Bible?

3. When the mercies of God are abused by men, he is the

occasion of their sin, though by means which ought to have the contrary effect. In all these ways men have often influenced the conduct of others; and if their own motives have appeared upright, they have been uniformly justified. Luther, whose sagacious mind saw the ambitious disposition of Henry VIII. without resorting to improper or unjust measures, drew him into his plans, and he became an important instrument in promoting the reformation. Although Henry may be supposed not to have had a single upright motive, is it not plain that his sin was most likely far less than it would otherwise have been, and Luther upon every honest principle, might have been fully justified? Neither can it be imagined that if Luther had possessed infinite wisdom, or power, his influence over the mind of Henry, would have been any the less consistent with his agency. It is perfectly immaterial as it respects the argument, what Luther's wisdom or power was, or how this influence was exerted, whether by arguments, or precepts and penalties, if it be in any way that is consistent with the agency of the mind. Where is the parent that would not feel bound, if it were in his power, to manage and overrule in this way, the misconduct of his own children? The man that would not do it, would not lessen the quantity of moral evil, and promote the interests of benevolence.

Now can it be imagined that he who created the mind, and knows beyond the possibility of mistake the influence of motives upon it, cannot exert an influence upon it in a manner as consistent with its agency, as that which men exert upon each other? How is it possible to prove that the conduct of wicked men is ever directed by the Almighty in any other, than in some of those ways which have now been mentioned? These are sufficient to warrant all the declarations of Scripture, in reference to his purposes. It seems to be an impression which men too readily receive, that if God overrule their

conduct so as to accomplish his purposes, they are no longer agents; whereas we can form no conception how purposes of holiness and grace can be accomplished by them, unless they are free moral agents. On every other supposition they cannot be the subjects of praise and blame, and of course, of pardon and salvation.

There is not a sentiment, it is well known, contained in the Bible, that inherits a greater share of the blind and unreasonable virulence of the natural heart than this, that God controls and overrules the conduct of wicked men. By some it is alleged as the reason why they reject the Bible, as though the first view of it were sufficient to show, that any book that should contain it, were too absurd to merit their notice. By others it is thought to be an apology for sin, carrying with it a sufficient weight to put to silence, at least, every believer in the doctrine. But if, as we have seen, it involves no principle of conduct but what they do and ought to justify in each other; if they attempt thus to abuse it, the veil is so flimsy, and the deception of their reasoning is so obvious, it can afford them but a sorry resting place.

As evidence in proof of the point in question, in addition to the facts which have been already produced, the reader is requested to look at the following and similar events of Divine Providence.

By a corrupt government, the Apostle Paul was sent from Jerusalem to Rome. This event was so overruled by the great Head of the Church, as greatly to promote the prosperity and spread of the gospel. Paul was a successful missionary at Rome, and the government were at the whole expense of his journey, while it was not in the power of the Church to have defrayed it. There was not a place on earth where it was so important at that time that the gospel should be established, as at Rome. In this case it was doubtless a less sin in that part of the Roman government, by

which the Apostle was sent from Palestine to Rome, than if he had been put to death. But that their motives in all their conduct were corrupt, and that many were anxious to put him to death, cannot be doubted. The case of Joseph and his brethren, is in many respects similar. In the course they pursued with him, their guilt was not greater, and with some, it was much less than if they had put him to immediate death. Still how immensely important this event proved, both to the family of Jacob, and to the church of God. Now if God could overrule the conduct of these men without the least injury to their agency, and if in these cases his character can be vindicated, it certainly can be in every other.

On the whole, let it not be understood by any remarks that have been made, that we would intimate that men are not entirely dependent on God. In the suppositions that have been introduced to explain this subject, this consideration was not brought into view, for this reason; it does not at all effect the question. If man be endowed with all the powers of a moral agent, and is so far supported that in every instance he is able to act as such, wherein could he be more free if he were independent? In view of all that has been said, may it not in justice to the cause of truth, be asked, where is the propriety or candour, in charging the supporters of this doctrine of divine purposes, with making men machines, or with degrading the divine character? Is it not pride and presumption, to assert that God has not knowledge and power sufficient to govern moral agents, without intruding upon the freedom of their actions, or staining the purity of his own character?

Q. Does not this doctrine discourage exertions in the use of means?

A. If because events are made certain by the purposes of God, all encouragement for exertion is destroyed, then the same consequences will follow unavoidably, from the *know*

edge of God. Should it here be objected that there is in truth, no such thing as *foreknowledge* with God; but that every event, present, past, and future, are equally present with him, it is cheerfully granted. This is only rendering events, if possible, still more certain. If all our conduct in the present world, and our final destiny in the world to come, are now present with the Deity; it is evident that a purpose can render them no more certain. But we do not intimate by these remarks that we consider this certainty, as inconsistent with encouragement for exertion, but we merely wish it to be seen, that we are answering the objection, for those who make it, as well as for ourselves. We have room to remark upon it only in reference to the duty of prayer. But our remarks will be equally applicable to every other. In view of this duty, we would ask, Is not the hope that God will hear and answer our prayers, our only encouragement to pray? But in hearing and answering our prayers, have we the least expectation that he will do any thing, that he has not intended to do? And if he have intended to hear and answer our prayer in any one instance, that intention, if he be unchangeable, must be co-eternal with himself. If he have no such intention in his mind, in consequence of having our prayers eternally before him, then in order to answer them, he must change. This doctrine then, is our only ground of hope. Having our desires eternally present with him, there is hope that he does now, and of course has eternally, designed to answer them. And what more can we want? His ears are now open, and have eternally been open, to every humble and sincere desire we offer. That there is ground of encouragement for exertion, when the event is unalterably certain, and entirely dependent on the pleasure of God, is a doctrine which every man in practice believes. Upon what other principle does the husbandman cultivate his fields? What encourages the sick man to seek a remedy, when he believes he has an

appointed time on earth? The same questions are applicable to the conduct of men, in all the various avocations of life. The man that would plead the certainty of events, or his dependence on God, as an excuse for neglecting his health or his property, would be considered either an object of pity or of contempt.

Finally, we see not how God can be infinite in wisdom, power and benevolence, nor how the Bible can be true—we see not how men can be free, and have any encouragement to act; and more than all, we see not how God can be true to the interests of the universe, nor how any confidence can be placed in his government, if his purposes do not extend to every event.

Edwards on the Will.—Dwight's Theology.—Dr. Wood's Letters to Unitarians.

SECTION VI.

Moral Government of God.

Q. What is meant by the *moral* government of God?

A. His treating men as moral beings; giving them laws, and making them the subjects of rewards and punishments. The fundamental principles of his government are revealed in those precepts which are usually called the *moral law*. The more we examine these principles, the more we discover that they are the foundation of a wise and holy administration. They secure, whenever they are perfectly obeyed, the most peaceful and happy state of society of which we can form any conception. No system of government that is formed by men, can be found, though it may occupy volumes, that is adapted to every case; while the principles of

this law, as epitomized by the Saviour, are contained in two short and easy sentences, and yet they contain an infallible standard, by which we can estimate every moral action that ever existed. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.* These two sentences exhibit the substance of the decalogue. If we look at this law as it was originally written upon the tables of stone, we shall perceive in it a scale of moral obligation, upon which the rights of all moral beings, are placed according to their importance. It is uniformly acknowledged by all who believe in the existence of God, that from the relations we sustain to him, as Creator and Preserver, and from the perfections of his character, we are under greater obligation to him than to any other being in the universe. To promote happiness is the supreme object of all beings. His happiness, as he is infinite in all his perfections, is more important than that of all other beings. Perfectly according with this, the first command in the decalogue requires that the supreme affection of every being, should be placed on him. The object in the second, third, and fourth commands, is doubtless to prevent the violation of the first. An attempt by any material representation or image whatever, to present the great Jehovah before the mind as forbidden in the second, naturally tends to produce limited and imperfect views of his character; and the habit of trifling with the *name* of God, or of indulging a familiar and unnecessary use of it as forbidden in the third, removes from the mind all that fear and reverence, which we should ever cherish towards him.

The fourth, gives us an opportunity to dismiss these earthly and distracting cares, which too often make us slaves to the present world, and assists us to renew upon our minds a sense of duty to God, to our fellow-men, and of the destinies that await us beyond the grave. The original design of this command, was undoubtedly to give mankind an institution

by which they might preserve in fresh remembrance this truth; the heavens and the earth are the work of God. In this way, so long as it was obeyed, it would be the means of preventing their falling into idolatry.

The other six of these commands, contained on what is called the second table, regard entirely the duties we owe to each other. As there is no obligation existing among men, so great as that which children are under to their parents, the first requirement upon this table, presents a clear and summary view of their duty to their parents. Should we descend along down this scale, and inquire what among all the interests of our neighbour, we ought to regard as the most sacred and most important, the answer would be, *life*. Accordingly, by the next command, as far as it is obeyed, life is rendered secure.

In the two next, the purity, domestick peace, and property of mankind, are rendered equally safe; and the two last commands, seem intended to give some effectual directions, by which, the whole of the second table, may be kept inviolate. Thus it is evident from this brief examination of the law, that, if it were the object of the great Jehovah, to form a standard of moral conduct, to secure a state of society that is absolutely perfect, this law is just as it should be. If this law were universally and perfectly obeyed, every moral being in all their operations, would move together as harmoniously as the solar system.

Q. What is the penalty of the law?

A. Upon this subject, there are different opinions. Some suppose it to be temporal, others spiritual, and others eternal death. Some conceive it to be the pain, but especially the reproaches of conscience that we experience in the present life, and others a limited punishment in the future world.

That it cannot be *temporal death*, must appear evident, from the following considerations:

1. If temporal or natural death be the penalty of the law, then believers are not redeemed from it, according to the most explicit declarations of the Bible. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." *a* "There is therefore now *no* condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." *b*

2. If natural death be the penalty, salvation cannot be of grace. If the sinner in his own person suffer all that the law demands, it is impossible to show wherein he can be saved by grace.

The penalty of the law cannot be *the evils we suffer in this life.* Among these I would include the reproaches of a guilty conscience.

1. The declarations we have already mentioned, which show that real Christians are redeemed from the curse of the law, are equally as decisive in proving that neither the remonstrances of conscience, nor the afflictions of the present life, can be the curse of the law. It cannot be questioned but that these are suffered to a greater extent, in many instances by the children of God, than by many of the most vile and hardened sinners.

2. If these things are the curse of the law, then the afflictions and the self-reproaches which men experience in the present life, must be exactly in proportion to their sin. If not, the penalty of the law is not equal nor just. But is it not a truth that never can be soberly questioned, that many of the most vile and abandoned characters have more success in their various undertakings, and less self-condemnation, than others who are well-meaning and far less guilty? It is a point which no candid man, it is believed, would undertake to support, that the miseries of men are in exact proportion to their characters in the present life. We shall next proceed to show that the curse of the law cannot be *spiritual death!*

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a Gal. iii. 13. *b* Rom. viii. 1—See also Rom. iii. 26.

By spiritual death, is usually meant, death in sin, or a destitution of spiritual life. If this be the curse of the law, then,

1, Christians are not intirely redeemed from it; and the Apostle's assertion that there is *no* condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, cannot be understood.

2. If this be the penalty of the law, then our crime, and our punishment, are the same thing. Upon this principle, every act of sin must be its own punishment; or, a succeding act or *series* of acts, must be the punishment of a preceding. If we adopt the first of these suppositions, that every act of sin must be its own punishment, we confound cause and effect together If crime be not the cause of punishment, or the reason why it is inflicted, we can place no dependence on the meaning of words. It is evident, that, understood in this sense, spiritual death cannot be the penalty of the law. It is more generally supposed that a succeeding series of acts, is the penalty for a preceding one. But upon this principle, sinners are universally pleased with their punishment. If for one transaction, the sinner is condemned to sin again, taking every thing into view, it is precisely what he chooses. If it should be said that the consequences of this course of sin will be misery, it may be replied; if the consequences are any thing different from a voluntary commission of sin, they are *not* the penalty; and if they are considered in any sense worse than the penalty, they are unjust Whatever trials and afflictions the wicked experience from sickness and other causes in the present world, they are upon this principle manifestly unjust. It must certainly be admitted, that all which the sinner deserves for his sin, is threatened by the law, if the law be a just and perfect rule. Now if the sentence of the law be merely death in sin, every thing else must

be unjust. If a prisoner be condemned for some misconduct, and be sentenced to simple confinement; would he not deem it unjust, should he receive a severe correction with the lash?

3. If spiritual death be the penalty of the law, it does not manifest, on the part of God, any opposition towards sin. Are we to suppose, that God is infinitely opposed to sin, and yet in the punishment he denounces against it, none of that opposition is manifested? Where shall his views and feelings towards sin be discovered, if not from that punishment with which he has threatened it? But if this punishment be nothing but a continual repetition of the crime, wherein does he manifest any aversion towards it; or wherein does he show that he is better pleased with holiness?

Were an earthly government to pursue a course like this, and were it to order that every man who is guilty of a crime, shall continue to repeat it, would they manifest towards that crime the least aversion or displeasure? From the arguments we have now briefly stated, though the opinion be advocated by able and good men, that spiritual death is the penalty of the law, we must believe that the opinion has been embraced without due reflection.

Neither can we suppose that the penalty of the law, is a *limited punishment* beyond the grave. If this be the penalty of the law, it must be either that punishment which the sinner will actually suffer, or one that is longer in duration. But the Scriptures give us not a hint concerning a punishment that will be longer in duration, than that which the incorrigible sinner will actually suffer. The duration of this punishment is expressed by such terms as *everlasting, forever and ever, eterna'*, &c. This is the punishment which the sinner will suffer, and we have no mention of any other. But if we suppose it to be that punishment which sinners will suffer, and

if we suppose it will ever terminate, there will be some eventually in heaven, who are not saved by grace. To say that the person who has suffered all that justice requires, can be saved from "*wrath to come*, through Jesus," *a* is a contradiction in terms.

Neither can we believe that the penalty of the law is the *death of the soul*, or *annihilation*. From the frequent use of the words *perish*, *destruction*, *destroyed*, &c. in the Scriptures, some are inclined to believe, that the punishment which is threatened, and which incorrigible sinners will finally suffer, is annihilation. But this cannot be reconciled with the uniform language of Scripture. The wicked are said to *suffer*, to be *tormented*, to *weep* and *wail;* and their punishment is compared to the *gnawing of a worm* that "never dies." *b*

2. If annihilation be the penalty of the law, then all incorrigible sinners are punished alike. It is presumed, no one will undertake to contend that upon the principles of justice, all are equally ill-deserving; of course, such a punishment must be manifestly unjust.*

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* It is the opinion of some men, that the penalty of the law is not any one thing that has been mentioned, but every thing taken in connexion that may be called evil. How it is that viewing these things together, as the penalty of the law removes the objections which have been urged against their being thus considered as individuals, it is not easy to determine. If the penalty of the law be death, temporal, spiritual and eternal, how is it that the believer in the present life is under *no* condemnation? This point that the real Christian is delivered from all condemnation in this life, does not depend on a few insulated passages of Scripture. It is believed that no one that brings to the investigation of this subject an honest and inquiring mind, would be willing to say, and undertake to defend it, that the believer can be justified, while a particle of the curse or condemnation remains upon him. Partial Justification, it is believed, is what no one will advocate. The following passages, among many others, will show that every believer is justified. "That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth." *c* "All that believe are justified from all things." *d* "A man is justified by faith." *e*

2. It must be seen that if spiritual death with the natural evils of the

a Thess. i. 10. *b* Mark ix. 44, 46, 48, and Luke xiii. 28. *c* Rom. iii. 26. *d* Acts xiii. 39. *e* Rom. iii. 28.—Gal. ii. 16, and iii. 24.

Lastly, if the curse of the law be none of these things, which we have mentioned, it must be *eternal death.* As a farther and more conclusive proof, we remark,

1. A violation of the law of God, if it be not counteracted, will produce an infinite evil. A violation of any law, if not prevented, will produce an evil equal to the importance of the law.

2. Nothing short of eternal death, will express the opposition of an infinitely holy being towards sin.

3. If the sufferings of no other being but Jesus Christ, would so far manifest the displeasure of God against sin, as to render it just for him to pardon it, then it must be viewed by him as an infinite evil.

4. To be saved from any thing short of eternal death, cannot be called eternal salvation.

5. Eternal death is threatened as the punishment of sin, throughout the Bible. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." *a* Here, that death which is the penalty of the law, is set in opposition to *eternal life.* *b*

Q. If eternal death be the penalty of the law, what are the natural evils which mankind experience in the present world?

A. They are the natural consequences of sin. When sentence of death is passed upon a criminal, his confinement, and all its attending evils, are not the penalty, but the *consequence* of his guilt. Besides, so far as we suppose mankind to suffer the curse of the law, in the present life, so far the

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present life, are considered as belonging to the penalty of the law; then the sinner is already undergoing the process of retribution. As far as he experiences the penalty of the law in this life, so far he receives according to the deeds done in the body before he leaves it. If the reader wish to see whether the Scriptures support the opinion that the present is a state of trial or probation, and the future a state of retribution, he is requested to look at the answers to the questions on that subject.

a Rom. vi. 23. *b* Mat. xxv. 46.—2 Thess. i. 9.

present is a state of retribution. It is a sentiment of Scripture, that *at the day of judgment* we are to render an account for the *deeds done in the body*. But so far as the penalty of the law is inflicted on sinners in the present life, so far the scenes of retribution are mingled with those of trial and probation. These trials and afflictions are often important means of grace.

Q. If the evils of the present life, be no part of the penalty of sin, is it not unjust for sinners to suffer them?

A. As it would be *just* for God to execute upon the sinner *immediately*, the penalty of the law, it cannot be *unjust* to suspend the execution, that he may give him an opportunity to repent and secure everlasting life; neither can it be unjust in God to send upon him, during this suspension, other evils, which are infinitely less than he deserves. Besides, most of the evils of this life, are employed as means of mercy to convince men of their guilt, and reconcile them to God.

Q. If eternal death be the penalty of the law, was not the declaration of the serpent true—"Thou shalt not surely die?" and how was the contrary declaration of the Almighty fulfilled?

A. Adam did not die an eternal death, nor did he enter upon such a death it is true; but no thanks to him or the serpent either, because it was justly deserved, and because it was suspended, not as an act of *justice*, but of infinite grace. As Adam fell under the sentence of eternal death, the great Jehovah had an opportunity to interfere with his plan of *grace*. But if the penalty of the law were *any thing else*, if it were not eternal death, and if it were executed upon him; or in other words, if he did die in the day that he ate thereof, then it was impossible for him to be a subject of grace. Justice had no demand against him. He had suffered all that justice required. How when could he be a subject

of mercy? The death, then, with which Adam was threatened, must have been eternal death, and the moment in which he became liable to its execution, was the moment when the great Redeemer consented to step between him and divine justice.

Scott's Bible.—Hopkins' System.—Dwight's Theology.—Edwards against Chauncey.—Birge on the Atonement.

SECTION VII.

Character of Man.

Q. What was the primitive character of man?

A. The character of man as he came from the hand of his Creator, was that of perfect conformity to the divine law. So God created man in his image; "In the image of God created he him." *a* "Lo, this have I found, that God hath made man upright." *b*

Q. Did man retain his primitive character?

A. In consequence of one act of disobedience, the character of man when viewed according to the law which we have examined, became entirely changed. "Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world." "For if through the offence of one man, many be dead." "For if by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners." *c* "God hath made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions." *d*

Q. What are we to understand by total moral depravity?

A. It is not meant by this term, that sinners labour under

a Gen. i. 27. *b* Eccl. vii. 29 *c* Rom. v. 12, 15, 17, 19. *d* Eccl. vii. 29.

a want of any natural powers or capacities, to perform what God has required, or that they are as sinful as they can be; but it implies an entire destitution of holiness, or of any thing that is pleasing to God, and a mind devoted to voluntary and actual transgression. According to this definition, there can be nothing to palliate or justify it. So far as it can be excused or justified, so far it is not blameworthy, and cannot be called *moral* depravity. After all this is conceded, we frequently hear depravity represented as a *nature*, that exists in the soul previous to all voluntary action; and for the existence and operation of which, sinners feel no more accountable, than for the height of their stature, or the colour of their hair. How can we avoid, they enquire, acting out our nature? If God has created us with such natures, must it not be expected that we shall exhibit them? All this is urged by many, with an apparent degree of honesty; but it is owing, we must believe, either to a wish to adopt something that will afford them an excuse, or to the indistinctness of their views on the subject of agency.

Man, with all his faculties, as he came from the hand of God, cannot be considered (aside from his conduct or actions) as either praise or blameworthy. He cannot be blamed for being created. Besides, for God to create that which is unholy, in the being or character of his creatures, is impossible. We have no other standard by which we can distinguish that which is holy or unholy, but the law of God. This requires nothing but voluntary action, and of course can be violated by nothing else. The requirements founded upon this law, never exceed the capacities of the sinner. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy mind and strength." Accordingly, the Apostle tells us, that "Sin is a transgression of the law." Now, whatever God has implanted in our natures by creation, is his conduct, not ours; and we find not

any intimation in the Bible in which we are required to repent of what we *are* by creation; but of what we have done. We are to be judged according to the *deeds* done in the body. Now we do not mean by action, merely those decisions of the mind which command the body, but *all* its movings, from the most incipient to the most imperative, which are either in approbation or disapprobation of the various moral objects that come before us. For these actions, and for these only, we are accountable.

Further, if the guilt of sin do not consist in the *nature* of the action, or if it be sinful only as it springs from a sinful cause, then it will be easy to show that it has no existence. The first sin it must be plain, whatever be our views of its origin, could not have had a sinful cause. It would suppose a sin before the first. Besides, if sin be blameworthy only as it springs from a sinful cause, and if we are created with an unholy nature, the consequence we have already mentioned, must follow, that we are blameable only for our creation. This view of depravity is directly opposed to common sense, as well as to the Bible.

Again, it is universally admitted, that in order for men to be accountable, it is essential that they be voluntary, or free; but we cannot conceive how it can be essential that they should be voluntary, unless they are voluntary *in that* for which they are accountable. On the whole, to suppose that sin, or depravity, to consist in any thing but the voluntary actions of the soul, is to impeach the character of God, and render every species of human government unjust. When therefore, we speak of total depravity, we would be understood to mean that the heart of man, is entirely destitute of holiness and devoted to actual transgression.

Q. What evidence have we that all mankind are by nature, thus totally depraved?

A. However humbling to the pride of men this doctrine may be, we are furnished with evidence of its truth as decisive and as convincing as that which attends any subject of a moral nature.

1. By comparing the conduct of men by nature, with the law, the standard of moral conduct, which we have already examined; we cannot but be convinced of the truth of this doctrine. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the rule by which we are to determine our characters. If there be no compliance in the heart, with this rule, there is nothing in it that is pleasing to God. We know that there is scarcely a stronger propensity in the human heart, than that by which men are led to judge as favourably of their own characters as they can; still, however strong may be its influence, we cannot perceive, how men can, for one moment, contrast their conduct and feelings with this rule, without a thorough conviction, that they are wholly depraved. If they apply the same meaning to the word love, as when it is applied to other objects, how can they but be convinced, so long as they murmur at his commands, dread to view him as present, and never contemplate his character with pleasure; how can they but be convinced, that according to this rule, their hearts are entirely depraved?

2. There are some declarations of Scripture, which were spoken in circumstances that render them as testimony peculiarly important. Some passages of this kind, we have already quoted. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." *a* This declaration was made, soon after the apostacy of Adam. It is said to be the result of what God *saw*; and the terms are

a Gen. vi 5.

unusually plain and unequivocal. That *every imagination* of the thoughts of the heart were evil. They were not partly, but *only* evil. They were not only evil for a time, but *continually*. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one." *a*

3. There is a course of reasoning adopted by the Apostle Paul, from which, we may derive, in favour of this doctrine, the most unanswerable evidence. After having given, in the two first chapters of his epistle to the Romans, the character of the Gentiles, knowing the pride of his own nation, when he came to the ninth verse of the third chapter, he introduces this question: "What then, are we better than they?" To this question, he gives the following answer: "No, in no wise; for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin: As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: There is none that doeth good, no not one Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now that the Apostle designed this to be a description of the character of the whole human race, must be granted from these two facts: First, the two classes, that he mentions, Jews and Gentiles, evidently include the whole.—Secondly, when he comes, in the 19th verse, to compare the character, which he had described, with the law of God, he

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a Ps. xiv. 2, 3. *ee* Ps. liii. 23.

draws a conclusion concerning *all the world.* "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

4. The confession of the best of men, and especially of inspired men, must be viewed as evidence in this case, of no ordinary weight. The Apostle Paul, addressing himself to the Ephesian Church, observes, "And you, hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world." *a* What can be more decisive and unequivocal than these declarations? It is according to the course of this world, to be dead in trespasses and sins. But in the next verse, he includes himself in the same charge. "Among whom also, we *all* had our conversation in times past—and were by nature, the children of wrath, even as others." *b* "But God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together."

5. This is the only reason that is offered throughout the Bible, to account for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world. What can be plainer and more to the point in question, than such declarations as the following? "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." *c* How can he be said to be the "Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world," unless the whole world were dead in sin? *d* Indeed, is not the whole economy of redemption bottomed on this fact, that men are depraved? How could it be proper to represent the gospel as the ministry of reconciliation, if men were not his enemies?

6. We may derive the most convincing proof of this point

a Eph. ii 1, 2. *b* ver. 3 and 4. *c* 2 Cor. v 14. *d* 1 John ii. 2.

from the conduct of men. On this subject, the history of the world is precisely the counterpart of the representations contained in the Bible. It shows the character of man to be exactly what we should expect to find it, from what is said in the Scriptures. What is the history of the world but one continued and gloomy recital of guilt? Perhaps it may be thought that this, though it be true, does not amount to any evidence that every man by nature, is *totally* depraved. In answer to this, I would remark that there are circumstances in which the real characters of men are exhibited, without the least disguise or restraint. These circumstances are such as attend almost *every* man in some period or other of his life. I refer to the hour of relaxation, when the mind turns to the object that is most dear to the heart, as naturally as a stone inclines to the earth. Men may be induced by motives of honour, profit, or fear, to perform an external service, which, in its nature, is unpleasant to the heart; but when they turn to their pleasures without the least hindrance or control, they let out the character of their hearts without reserve. Look, then, at the various objects, to which men in every age, and in every part of the world, in the pursuit of pleasure, have uniformly turned. Are they not such as afford undoubted evidence, that they "Delight not in the knowledge of his ways?" Is it not true, that the character of God, his omnipotence, his perfect holiness, &c. are of all other subjects, the most unwelcome to natural men, while in the pursuit of pleasure? And would it be possible to account for this fact, only upon this principle, that men by nature are in a moral sense, totally depraved? Thus, as painful and humiliating as this doctrine may be to our pride, there is no doctrine which is supported by more convincing and unequivocal evidence.

Q. In what sense did the whole human race fall with Adam?

A. We have already observed that the apostacy of his

posterity, was *in consequence* of his disobedience. This is according to a law, which, as far as we are able to trace it, appears to be universal through the creation of God. Thro' all the various species of men and beasts, and through the whole field of vegetative nature, it is so constituted, that every thing shall produce its like. When Adam became a sinner, upon the same principle that the offspring in every other species, must be like its progenitor, his offspring were sinners. "And Adam begat a son in his own likeness and after his image." *a*

Q. Is the sin of Adam in any sense ours, or are we blameable for his sin?

A. It is difficult to form any conception, how one being can violate a law for another, especially a law that will accept of no service but that of the heart. Is it not a point in which all are agreed, that in order that we might be the subjects of praise or blame, we must possess the faculties of moral agents? But how could we possess these faculties in any other being before we had existence? We might as easily believe, that we might be punished or rewarded in some other being, thousands of years before we had an existence, as that we might sin, and be condemned, in Adam. We can no more be subjects of blame without existence, than of punishment. Those passages of Scripture which have usually been thought to imply, that the sin of Adam was ours, on a careful examination appear to have no such meaning. "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned." Here the reason which is given why all men die, is, that all have sinned. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." *b* This proves nothing more than what we have already stated, that it was in *consequence* of, or by *reason* of Adam's sin, that all

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a Gen. v. iii. b Rom. v. 15, 17, 19.

other men became sinners. In no other sense, do we conceive that Adam acted for his posterity. If he sinned, his posterity like the offspring in every other case, were to be like him. This interpretation is easy and natural, while every other will render it impossible to reconcile these passages with other parts of the Bible. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." *a*

Q. Is not the doctrine of total moral depravity inconsistent with the perfections of God?

A. We are aware that it is thought by many, to be a base reflection upon the character of God, to suppose that he did not prevent, when it was perfectly within his power, the apostacy of our race. They receive it as conclusive evidence, that he did not in any sense, wish to prevent it, and of course, that he is not opposed to sin. It is true that God had power to prevent the apostacy of Adam, and the entrance of sin into our world. He might have established our race in a state as perfect as that of angels: But how, in that case, would it have been possible for him to have exhibited many of his perfections, which will now be seen with endless and increasing lustre? Take the story of Joseph and his brethren, and suppose that his brethren were as free as it is possible for dependent beings to be, was it inconsistent with the character of God, so to overrule their conduct as to make it the occasion of great blessings to them and their posterity? And if the depravity of our whole race can be so overruled as to lay a foundation for a display of pardon, mercy, tenderness, compassion, justice, holiness, &c. which never would have been

a Ezek. xviii. 20.

made without it, wherein was the permission of sin on his part, inconsistent with his character?

It will not be denied, but that he had a right to place them on trial; of course, he was not under obligation to prevent their fall; and if his wisdom is such that he can make the restoration of one to his favour, an occasion of higher joy in heaven, than the preservation of ninety and nine otherwise could have been; wherein was the permission inconsistent with his moral perfections? Moreover, this objection is to be answered in another way. Is the doctrine of total moral depravity taught in the Bible? We trust that we have shown that this question must be answered in the affirmative, if we have any regard to candour or to truth. The Bible stands upon its own foundation, and it certainly will not be supposed that God has revealed doctrines for our faith, inconsistent with his character.

Q. Is not this doctrine inconsistent with free agency?

A. This doctrine, as we have explained it, so far from being inconsistent with the agency of men, is of itself, a conclusive proof, that they are free. Upon what principle are they under obligation to obey the commands of God, if they are not free? If they were not perfectly voluntary, it would not be possible for them to be depraved. It is taken for granted by many, that so far as we are depraved, we are not free; whereas, the very reverse is true. What is there in the nature of *sin*, that is more inconsistent with liberty of action, than holiness? And why may we not as well deny, that a perfectly holy being can be free, as one that is perfectly sinful?

Q. If sin consist only in the voluntary act of the soul, how can infants be sinners?

A. It is generally considered that the answer to this question is one of the most difficult in the whole system of theolo-

gy. That infants are treated as sinners, is generally admitted. They are visited with sickness and death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." *a* Their death, it is plain from this passage, is evidence that they have sinned. Some endeavour to maintain that they are guilty of the sin of Adam; and others, that they inherit a nature from him, which is the cause of all their sinful exercises. But we can derive no relief for ourselves by making them guilty in that, in which, they are no more active or voluntary, than in the colour of their hair; or by supposing that they sinned five thousand years before they existed! We have already offered our objections to both of these opinions. But what evidence have we, that they may not be actual sinners, as soon as they are born? It must be supposed that they possess all the faculties of soul, that are possessed by adults, or they cannot be moral beings. If the faculties, though feeble, be not entire, we cannot conceive how they can be moral beings; of course, we cannot conceive how they can be the subjects of rewards or punishments. It is universally conceded by those who believe in the Bible, that there will be none of our race received to heaven, but through the mediation of Christ. But surely we cannot suppose that they can be pardoned through his blood, when they are so far from being moral agents as not to possess an entire soul. But if it be granted that they are in the possession of all the faculties of the soul, it will be impossible to prove that they are not capable of moral action. They must be as capable of exercises according to the strength of their faculties as adults. These exercises must have a nature, and that nature must be either in conformity to the law, or opposed to it; and it is as easy for the Deity to discover which, as in the most prominent ac-

a Rom v. 12.

tions of adults. It is supposed by many, that no being can be guilty of violating a law, who does not possess a knowledge of that law. But if this be true, the heathen cannot be guilty of sin, as they know nothing about the law: And yet the Apostle tells us, that as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law. He also observes, that "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written on their hearts." *a* It seems to be distinctly conveyed by this passage, that in some sense, the law is written upon the hearts of all men by nature. Dr. Scott, in explaining this passage, remarks, "The fragments of the law, which had been originally written in the heart, exciting their influence, by a natural sense of right and wrong, appeared in their works." The most plausible objection that we recollect to have seen to this view of the subject, is, its supposed inconsistency with the doctrine of total depravity. But does an impression of right or wrong, written upon the mind, with which there is no conformity in the heart, indicate or exhibit any thing that is pleasing to God, any more than if it were written upon a leaf of the Bible? And though, in some things which refer to external conduct, they should comply with its dictates, it would be no more evidence of love to God, than similar conduct in those who have a knowledge of the law.

Again, it is objected by others, that the impressions of right and wrong on the minds of children, seem to be perfectly according to their education. They are no doubt, to a great extent under the influence of education, but not entirely; if they were, it would be as easy to convince them, that, one thing is as right, as another; that it is as right to steal, as to bestow alms upon the poor. This it is believed, every person must see, does not correspond with fact. There is no doubt, but that this impression, whatever it may be, is more and

a Rom. ii. 12, 14, 15.

more obliterated by a life of sin; and of course, the renewal or regeneration of the sinner, is represented under the metaphor of writing the law upon his heart, and ensuring to it his obedience.

On the whole, it is plain, that something of this kind exists, and that children are moral beings, capable of moral actions, as soon as they possess entire, the faculties of the soul.

We are the more confident in this opinion, as there is no other, which upon any just principles of interpretation, can be reconciled with the Bible. "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born speaking lies." *a* "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass colt." *b* To this, we may add, that the conduct of children, corresponds with this account. The first of their conduct, from which we can perceive the character of their hearts, is always such, as indicates an aversion to God, and every thing of a holy nature.

Hopkins' System.—Dwight's Theology.—Park-Street Lectures.—Dr. Wood's Letters to Unitarians.—Triangle.

SECTION VIII.

Atonement.

Q. If the demerit of sin be everlasting death, and if all mankind by nature, are dead in sin, why is the execution of justice suspended?

A. It is on account of what is usually denominated the atonement. By the atonement, the way is prepared for the offers of pardon and salvation to be made, and the execution

a Ps. lviii 3. *b* Job xi 12

of justice to be suspended, so that sinners may have an opportunity to accept of them. "He that believeth not, is condemned already." *a* It is plain from this passage, that according to the language of justice, every sinner is under condemnation; and it must be owing to mercy or grace, that he is spared. In the parable of the fig-tree, our Saviour represents justice as demanding the immediate execution of the law, and mercy, as pleading for it to be suspended. The reason why mercy pleads that the execution might be stayed, is that the sinner might have an opportunity to repent and secure the favour of God. *b*

Q. What do we understand by the atonement?

A. By the word atonement, is generally understood, a full reparation made for the commission of some crime, or the neglect of some duty. In some cases, this reparation may be made by the guilty themselves, but in others it is not possible. When a man has violated the principles of commutative justice, and has not punctually met his engagements, he may afterwards atone for his neglect, by giving his creditor ample satisfaction. But in the case of sin it is impossible for the sinner himself to make reparation. When an offence is committed against a government, in order that the offender may receive pardon, the government has the same right to require satisfaction as an individual. Sin is a crime committed both against God and his government. As God has a just demand upon every sinner for the affection of his heart, and for the improvement of his time and talents, when he has once violated his law, if he were perfectly obedient ever after, as it would be nothing more than his duty for that time, it would never make reparation for past guilt. Now if an atonement be made for the sinner, it must be made by some other being. That being must be able to make reparation to

a John iii. 18. *b* Luke xiii 6—10.

the government of God, before it can be expected that he will be satisfied. Nothing can satisfy his government but that which will show his opposition to sin, and his determination to maintain the law, as much as would be shown in the execution of the penalty. If this can be done, his government can sustain no injury, though sinners should be pardoned.

Q. What evidence have we that such an atonement has been made?

A. It cannot be expected, that evidence of this kind can be obtained, only from the Scriptures. But if we resort to them, the question is answered at once. "God so loved the world that he hath given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." *a* "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." *b* "The Lord hath laid on him, the iniquity of us all."

The day after our Saviour had risen from the dead, he overtook two of his disciples as they journeyed towards Emmaus, and finding that they were discouraged because their Master had been put to death, and his body committed to the grave, he reproved them in the following severe and comprehensive terms: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" *c* "Christ died for our sins." *d* These are but a small number of the passages that speak with a plainness and decision upon this subject, that no art or ingenuity can evade. To any one who reads the Bible with care and attention, the declaration

a John iii 16 *b* Is liii. 5, 6. *c* Luke xxiv 25, 26. *d* 1 Cor. xv 3.—Heb ix. 28.—1 Pet. ii. 24.—Gal iii 13.—1 Pet. iii 18, and i. 18, 19.—Rev. v. 9.—Acts xx. 28.—John x 15.—Rom, iv. 25.—1 Thess. v. 10.—1 Cor v. 7, and vi. 20.

that the doctrine of atonement is not contained in it, must be surprising, especially if it come from one who pretends to make it the foundation of his faith.

Q. Why could not pardon be extended to sinners without an atonement?

A. For the same reason that pardon cannot be extended to all murderers, consistent with the stability and safety of government. Unless sinners are punished, or the disapprobation of government toward the violation of law, be manifested in some way or other, it is impossible for the government to be supported. From such a government, however vile and mischievous a man may be, he can have nothing to fear. The authority of law would exist only in name, and it would have no possible influence in the suppression of vice. Perhaps it may be thought that since the great Jehovah has power sufficient to maintain his government, he has no need of such motives. It is doubtles true that he has power sufficient to bring every being in the universe into perfect submission to his law; but it must be remembered, that his is a moral government, and must be supported by means of motives. So far as men comply with what is required, without motive or design, or, in other words, so far as they are compelled by an overruling and Almighty power to comply without any willingness or unwillingness of their own, there is no blame or praise to be attached to them.

In a government supported in this manner, none of the perfections of God, such as justice and mercy, could be seen. It is then important that men should be capable of being influenced by motives; if this were not the fact, we see not how purposes of mercy could be accomplished by them. From these observations it must be evident, that if God were to pardon sin without an atonement, it would result in the following evils:

1. He would be unjust to his law; as he would manifest no respect to it, or determination to support it.

2. He would be unjust to his kingdom; as nothing would be done to suppress disobedience, or to promote peace and good order.

3. He would be unjust to himself; as he would furnish his creatures with no evidence that he is a friend to holiness, or an enemy to sin.

Q. By what was the atonement made?

A. Concerning the proper answer to this question, there are different opinions. It is thought by many, that the atonement was made by the *obedience* of Christ; by others, that it was made by his sufferings; and by others still, it is attributed to both. From the remarks which have been made in showing the necessity of an atonement, it is plain that the object for which it is made, is to support the honour of the divine character and government, and at the same time, lay a foundation for the pardon of repenting sinners. This, it may be readily seen, can never be accomplished but by something that would manifest the holiness of God and his hatred to sin, as much as if he were to inflict upon sinners the penalty of the law.

By which of these things, to which the atonement is ascribed, is this object seen to be accomplished? By the obedience or sufferings of Christ, or both? When we speak of the *obedience* of Christ in our discussion of this subject, we must mean his conformity to the precepts of the moral law, otherwise there would be no ground for dispute.

If his willingness to come into the world on his errand of mercy, or his obedience unto death, be what is intended by the term, there is no room for debate. No one, it is presumed, will be inclined to contend that his sufferings and death, could in any sense, be meritorious, unless they were the ef-

fect of a voluntary choice. The question now is, does the obedience of Christ, when understood in this sense, manifest the holiness of God and his hatred to sin, as much as if divine justice were executed? It would seem that the suggestion of this question, would render any answer unnecessary. By what means can it be said, that, by a cheerful compliance with the requirements of the law, the Lord Jesus has shown the determination of the Father to support and vindicate it? Would sinners infer from this merely, that a violation of the law was a crime, deserving of infinite punishment? Would they certainly conclude that God was determined to execute the penalty of his law? If this expression of the feelings of God would render it consistent for him to issue his proclamation of pardon, then might not every monarch, as far as he had himself obeyed his own laws, extend pardon to every guilty offender? Or could not a king who had a wise and virtuous son who had never been seen to violate a single law in the government of his father, on account of the obedience of his son, without any other punishment or manifestation of his hatred towards their conduct, send forth an indiscriminate proclamation of pardon to such as openly and daringly trampled his authority under their feet?

Further, the divine law requires that we should give to every being, his rights. Now is it not evident, that however dignified the rank may be, which a being holds in the scale of existence, so long as he does no more than this, he does no more than what justice requires of him? Upon what principle can another being, be pardoned on account of his conduct, when he has done nothing more than he ought to do? On the whole, we cannot see how that the obedience of Christ, can answer the purposes for which an atonement is necessary. We admit, that without it, his sufferings and death would have been of no value. No one, however, will

contend that there is no difference between the qualification for a work, and the work itself.

It must appear evident also, from the remarks we have made, that the obedience of Christ, as it was nothing more than what the law required of him, and as it was a prerequisite qualification, it would not have constituted *any part* of the atonement. Besides, if his obedience could do any thing, why could it not have accomplished the whole work? As it was the obedience of an infinite being, every effect that obedience could produce, must certainly be infinite, why was it necessary then, that Christ should die?

We are now prepared to make the inquiry whether the *sufferings* of Christ could make that atonement, which the condition of mankind requires. In order to determine this question, we must inquire first, What would have been the consequences, had the law taken its course, and had the penalty been executed upon every offender. This, while it would have undoubtedly supported the divine law, would have been viewed by the great Jehovah, as in itself considered, a great evil. If he had not regarded the misery of his creatures as an evil, then to have inflicted the penalty of this law upon them, would have been no evidence of his high esteem for his law: But if he considered the sufferings to which they were exposed, as a great evil, to have executed the penalty upon them, in this case, would have been giving the most decided evidence of his determination to support it. Now in order that the sufferings of Christ should manifest on the part of God, as high an esteem for his law, as could have been manifested, if he had executed its penalty upon man, it is only necessary that his sufferings should *appear* to be, in *his view*, as great an evil as would have been seen, in their misery, if Christ had not interfered.

Upon whatever principle we endeavour to form an estimate of the magnitude of the evil, to which, as it appears to

us, the great Jehovah submitted in consenting to the sufferings of his Son, unless it be from the quantity of his suffering, we shall not hesitate a moment, as he was his only begotten Son, and sustained a character infinitely amiable and holy, to acknowledge that it appears to be a greater sacrifice (if the term be proper) on the part of God, than if mankind had suffered the penalty themselves. To form an estimate of the evil manifested from the quantity of pain, and not from the character of the sufferer, would be obviously improper. It must be apparent that a king would manifest a greater regard for his law, by consenting to let his own son suffer its sentence, than if he were for the same crime, to inflict it on some obscure citizen. The sufferings of Christ, it is plain from these remarks, accomplish the very purposes for which an atonement is wanted.

By consenting to them for the sake of the law, God has shown an attachment to his law, and a determination to support it, which will answer all the purposes in the government of his immense empire, that would have been answered, if the penalty had been executed upon every offender. But this is a point on which the Scriptures speak with great plainness. The definite object for which our Lord suffered and died, is said to be, by the Apostle, "To *declare* the *righteousness* of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth." *a* Without this declaration, God would not be just, were he to justify the sinner that believes. He would neither be just to his law, his character, nor his kingdom. That this declaration could not be made, but by the *sufferings* of Christ, is capable of as full and decided proof, as any point in the whole system of our faith. After our Lord had passed through the whole of his life, in perfect obedience to the moral law, he declared, "Now is my soul troubled, and what

a Rom. iii. 25.

shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; *but for this cause, came I to this hour.*" *a* The grand object for which he had lived, and for which he was prepared, was the hour of suffering. How many times does he tell his disciples and his hearers, that his time had not come! But after his resurrection, he tells his disciples, that it was the sense of the prophets that Christ "must *suffer* these things, and enter into his glory." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." *b*

Now let the question be asked, How is he to be a propitiation? The answer will be, "By faith in his blood." If we then inquire, why he is to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; the answer will be in the same verse, "To declare his righteousness" &c. As we have not room to insert but few, among the many passages of Scripture, that speak with decision on this subject, we here remark, that by looking hastily over the New Testament, we find something more than seventy places, where the atonement is ascribed to the sufferings, death, and blood of Christ. But such passages as the following cannot be either misunderstood or explained away: "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." *c* It was the manner of Paul to "Open and allege that Christ must needs have suffered," &c. *d* "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." *e* Those passages which speak of the *one offering* of Christ, in opposition to the yearly offerings of the Jewish high-priests, cannot, as we conceive, be so explained as not to be at war with the sentiment, that any part of the atonement was made by his obedience. They not only show the atonement to consist in his *one offering*, but they show also, that this *one offering* was the offering of himself. "But we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, *once* for all." After he had offered

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a John xii. 27 *b* Rom. iii. 25 *c* Col i. 20. *d* Acts xvii. 3. *e* Heb. ix. 22.

one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God. *a* "Who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself." *b*

Q. But how could the sufferings of Christ, show on the part of God, as great an attachment to his law, as would have been shown by the punishment of every sinner, since nothing but his human nature could suffer?

A. The connexion between the human and divine natures in the person of Christ, was such as to form one perfect character; and the sufferings of that character, was as bright a display of the holiness of God as though his divinity itself had suffered. Besides, we have already shown that the merit of sufferings, when they are endured for the sake of a law, are meritorious in exact proportion to the character of the sufferer. Further, though his divine nature could not suffer, yet we may view it as the altar, on which human nature was offered.—It is the altar that sanctifies the gift. *c*

Q. How extensive is the atonement?

A. To determine its extent, we must look at the obstacles that stood in the way of our salvation, had no atonement been made. We have seen, that according to the Apostle, God could not have been just to himself, nor to his kingdom, if he had extended pardon to sinners without some declaration of his righteousness. Now this declaration must be made before it could be just or consistent for him to pardon *one* sinner; and when it *had been made*, a door was open, or a foundation was laid, which had no reference to number. Upon the same principles, which rendered it just for God to pardon one sinner, might any number be pardoned. The atonement, therefore, knows nothing about limits. It is a provis-

a Heb. x. 10, 12, 14. *b* vii. 27. ix 26, 28.—1 Pet. iii. 18. *c* Mat. xxiii. 19.

tion as extensive as the wants of our world. Perfectly according to this, is the decision of Scripture: "Christ died for all." *a* "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." *b* "He gave himself a ransom for all." *c* The offers of salvation which are throughout the whole Bible, free and indiscriminate, are another proof, that the atonement is unlimited.

Q. If the atonement be sufficient for the whole world, why is it not certain that the world will be saved?

A. The atonement, it will be seen, from all that has been said, does not secure the salvation of any. It only declares the righteousness of God, so that he *may* be just, when he justifies the sinner that *believes*. As it respects our salvation, it is entirely a *preparatory* measure. It is happily represented in the Scriptures by the opening of a door. It does open a door, through which sinners, consistently with the character of God, may enter into the kingdom of heaven. But is it certain, because a door is open, that men will enter it? The atonement is also very clearly represented by a feast. But will a feast, however adapted to our wants, and however abundant it may be, afford us any pleasure or support, unless we actually partake of it? Are we not told in that parable in which the atonement is compared to a supper, that some to whom the invitation was given, shall not taste of it? Besides, there are *conditions* without a compliance with which, on their part, notwithstanding the atonement, God cannot be just in extending pardon to guilty men. So true is this, that there is not a passage in the Bible in which the offer of salvation is made, but what exhibits, either directly or indirectly, these conditions. *d*

Q. What *are* the conditions of life, and why are they essential, notwithstanding the atonement?

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a 2 Cor. v 14, 15. *b* 1 John ii 2. *c* 2 Tim. ii 6. *d* Mat. xvi. 16 John iii. 16.—Rom iii 26.—Heb. v 9.

A. The conditions of life are, such as faith, repentance, love to God, &c. and each and all of them imply a disposition of friendship to God and his government. Repentance, as it consists in loathing the nature of sin, it will be easily seen, justifies the demands of the law, and in this way supports the honour of his government. Faith implies the same, and in addition, a cheerful trust and confidence in the merits, or atonement of Christ. Now for God to pardon or justify the sinner on account of what Christ has done, without his compliance with these terms, would be far more injurious to the honour of his character and government, than if he were to pardon without an atonement. He would show a willingness to submit to what must be in itself a great evil, that he might justify his enemies while they retained their enmity. What more direct course could he take to show, that he meant to abandon his government to lawless injustice? He would be unjust, as we have seen, to his law, to himself, and to his kingdom, and still more so to his beloved Son. From these remarks, we may see why the Scriptures uniformly insist upon faith and repentance as necessary to salvation.

Q. What are we to understand by justification?

A. It is simply pronouncing the sinner to be just, on account of the atonement.

Q. What influence has faith in justification?

A. We have already seen, that without it, for God to extend pardon would be unjust; he has, therefore, established it as a condition of justification. As faith is the voluntary exercise of the sinner, it becomes the instrument by which, or through which, he is justified.

Q. In what sense are we justified by works, and how are the declarations of St. Paul and St. James on this subject to be reconciled?

A. It is by good works that we manifest that we are jus-

tified, or in other words, they are the evidence of justification. It is in this sense, that the Apostle James is to be understood, when he tells us that Abraham, and the harlot Rahab, were justified by works. By their works they manifested that they had that living faith by which, according to Paul, men are to be justified. The Apostle Paul, in his remarks upon this subject, uses the term *works* in a very different sense. He means by it, the deeds of the law, those by which, we have a legal righteousness. He therefore tells us, that if Abraham were justified by works, he had whereof to glory. He then adds, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now this faith, which, according to Paul, was counted unto Abraham for righteousness, was what James denominates good works; and it is directly opposed to what is meant by the term *works*, as it is used by Paul.

Q. In what sense is the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers?

A. The Scriptures no where intimate a real imputation, or transfer of the righteousness of Christ to those that believe, but only, that through faith, it is consistent for God to treat them as though they were righteous. So righteousness *was counted* to Abraham, or he was *treated* as righteous. From various expressions in the Bible, which are entirely figurative, such as *purchase*, *ransom*, &c. some have inferred that there is in the pardon of believing sinners, a real transfer of character. But a moment's attention, however, will convince us that moral character, is inseparably connected with its agent, and cannot be transferred. We may receive pardon and justification, through the righteousness of Christ, but it is his righteousness after all. Besides, if our guilt were literally imputed to him, then *he* became really guilty, and received, when he suffered for us, a literal punishment. To this, we presume, no real Christian would be willing to subscribe;

we must, therefore, suppose that all those passages that seem to imply a real imputation, are figurative, and designed to teach merely this important truth, that in consequence of the sufferings of Christ, God can now, consistently with his character, treat the sinner that believes, *as though he were righteous.*

Hopkins' System.—Birge on the Atonement.—Dr. Wood's Letters to Unitarians.—Dwight's Theology.—Dr. Edwards' three Sermons.

SECTION IX.

Regeneration.

Q. 1. By what means are sinners made partakers of the atonement, if they are depraved, and if none are partakers, but such as repent and believe?

A. By what is usually called regeneration.

Q. 2. What is regeneration?

A. It is a change of heart. By the word heart, we generally understand the desires, or the disposition of the mind. Previous to regeneration, the desires of the mind are wholly selfish. The sinner has no love for any object, that is holy or truly excellent. He derives no real pleasure from contemplations on the character of God or his divine administration; at least, when his views of those subjects are at all correct. But after his heart is regenerated, God is the supreme object of his affections. The language of his heart is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." As this love is toward new objects, and objects of a holy character, it is in a moral sense, the beginning of a new life; and is called in the language of meta-

phor, a language in which Scripture abounds, the *new birth*, or regeneration.

Q. 3. By what agent is regeneration effected?

A. It is attributed to the Holy Spirit. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." *a* "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." *b* "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." *c* It will be seen by these passages, that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, to the exclusion of every other agent.

Q. By what instrument, is regeneration effected?

A. Divine truth. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." *d* "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." *e* "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." "And this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you." *f*

Q. Is the subject of this work active or passive?

A. There is scarcely a question in the whole system of truth, on which the opinions of great and good men, have been more at variance, than on this. But the opinion, that the subjects of this work are passive, it is believed has been imbibed from a habit, to which we are from our situation constantly exposed—a habit of carrying the impressions that we receive from the operations of matter, to those of the mind. Many have undoubtedly received the same impressions, from the metaphorical language of Scripture. Such expressions as the following, *begotten, born again, created anew, &c.* have often been viewed as teaching the passivity of the sinner

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a Titus iii. 5. *b* John i. 13. *c* John iii. 5. *d* James i. 18. *e* 1 Cor. iv. 15. *f* 1 Pet. i 23, 25.

in regeneration, with great clearness. But it is certainly unsafe, to depend in forming our opinions on the operations of the mind, on language that must be considered metaphorical. These passages prove decidedly that the producing or efficient agency in this operation, is wholly of the Spirit. But if they are designed to show, that the agency or co-operation of the sinner is entirely excluded, how shall we reconcile them with that numerous class of passages which apparently at least, represent the sinner as being the principal agent in the work? The passages to which we allude, are such as the following: "The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah." *a* And yet we are told by the Apostle, that "Repentance is the gift of God." *b* "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" "Come ye to the waters." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." It is doubtless true that these commands are consistent with the sentiment that we have already established that the Holy Spirit is the producing or efficient agent in this work; but unless we admit that such as are regenerated, do turn, do come, do labour, &c. we cannot conceive how these passages can be explained, upon any just principles of interpretation. Upon any other conclusion, we must admit that God has commanded what is never done, and what never *can* be done. If mankind are in any sense able to do what God has commanded, then when they are made to obey, according to his promise, *c* they must be active and free. Besides, they are commanded to "make to themselves new hearts." *d* We know not how to reconcile the opinion with the character of God, that he should command men to do that which they are so far from being able to do, that they are not free or active in it, when it is done. If in regeneration something is done which in every sense is beyond the

a Mat. xii. 41. *b* Acts v. 31. *c* Ezek. xxxvi 27. *d* Ezek. xviii 31.

power of men, on what principle can they be condemned for not being born again?

Further, is it not cheerfully admitted by all who believe in the truth of christianity, that the experienced Christian may be the subject of the influences of the Holy Spirit, while his own agency or activity is in no way interrupted nor impaired? By what principle of reasoning can it be made to appear that the first exercises of a holy nature, may not be as easily produced in this way, as any that follow. The experience of every man that is born again, perfectly corroborates this statement. Are not all Christians constrained to acknowledge, that they were "willing in the day of his power?"

Q. Are the operations of the Spirit of God, in regeneration, irresistible?

A. That the Holy Spirit is able to exert an influence on the mind, which cannot be resisted, there can be no doubt. It is however obvious, that merely because the Spirit *is not resisted*, in those cases that result in regeneration, is no argument that it cannot be in others, or that it could not have been in them. Stephen declared to his persecutors, that they did always resist the Holy Ghost. If the Spirit may be resisted in some cases, what argument can be drawn from the Omnipotence of God, to prove that it may not be in others? Besides, does not the representation that the influences of the Spirit are irresistible, naturally leave on the mind a collateral impression, that in every instance of regeneration, there is an exertion of power, beyond what the sinner is able in any sense to exert; and of course, if men remain unregenerate, they are to be condemned for refusing to put forth a power, which they do not possess?

Q. Is the change which is effected in regeneration entire, or is it partial?

A. So far as the question refers to the subject, it is par-

tial. The subject has affections or desires which are new; but he has also remaining such as he before possessed, and such as are opposed to his new or regenerated nature. The regenerated man is unlike every other being. He is really sinful and really holy. And it cannot be denied but that there is something in the experience of every Christian, which fully supports this statement, contradictory as at first sight it may appear. A view of the characters, and of the numbers, who can appeal to their own experience in support of it, must convince us, that nothing can be more uncandid and irrational, than to suppose that they are deceived. There are multitudes among the most sober and enlightened, in the whole population of our world, who know that in the objects of their affections, they can discover the operations of two opposite natures. They can "See another law in their members, warring against the law of their minds," so that they can say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

Whatever may be our hopes or pretensions, if we know nothing of that warfare, which the Apostle, in giving in his own feelings, has described in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, we are strangers to this important change. The best men that have ever lived on earth, even the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, have given us the most undeniable evidence that they were imperfect. That they had some upright or holy desires, will not be doubted; and if they had not some that were unholy, for some of their conduct we shall find it impossible to account. To overcome this remaining corruption, is the work of sanctification, in which every Christian is engaged through life. The prophet Job observes, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: If I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse." *a* From this it is plain, that although Job had been called by

a Job ix. 20.

the great Jehovah a perfect and upright man, he did not consider himself as sinless. Christians in the Scriptures are sometimes called perfect, when nothing more is to be understood by it, than that their characters, so far as they are seen by men, are regular and upright. "In many things we offend all. If any man offend not *in word*, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." *a*

Q. Is the change effected in regeneration progressive, or instantaneous?

A. It is presumed that much of the controversy which this question has excited, must be attributed to a different understanding of terms. If the word *regeneration* were understood to mean, as has been stated above, that change which is effected at the commencement of holiness in the heart, it must certainly be considered as instantaneous. To suppose that this change, which implies a change of character, can be progressive, is to suppose that there may be a time, when the subject is neither a saint nor a sinner. If this were possible, the subject would be at that time, a candidate neither for heaven nor hell.

Q. Why is regeneration necessary?

A. The necessity of regeneration is founded in the depravity of our natures. We have already shown that the character of man by nature, is in a moral sense, entirely depraved. By total depravity it has also been shown, that we mean not a want of power, but a want, or destitution of holiness. We will here repeat but one out of the numerous arguments which have been already advanced to prove that by nature, this is the character of our whole race. No better rule can be given to determine the characters of men, than to look at their conduct at such times when they exhibit the feelings of their hearts with the least reserve. If there be a period when none of the various restraints, which operate on

a James iii. 2.

the minds of men have any influence, it is when they turn to their pleasures. At such times, when it is their object to unbend their minds, and unburden themselves of the cares of life, they are not only less reserve, but they are more certain than at any other time, to have their minds on those objects with which they are best pleased. Such a time then, it is plain, would be the most favourable, to determine the character of their hearts. And would it not be what was never witnessed in our world, to see a man who had never been the subject of this change, turning to spiritual and holy contemplations—to humble and earnest prayer, as to that which was most pleasing to his heart? Reflections upon such subjects, are of all others the most unwelcome to the sinner's mind, especially when they present such truths before them, as condemn their favourite pursuits. From these remarks it is obvious, that the heart of every man by nature is averse to every thing that is upright or holy. But we have seen, while discussing the subject of atonement, that sinners cannot be partakers of the merits of Christ, until they have complied with conditions, that indisputably imply a love to God and his character. Regeneration is the only process by which it is possible for them to be brought to such a state of mind. So far as the interests of men were concerned, the sufferings and death of Christ would have been in vain, were it not for the process of regeneration. However rich and ample the atonement may be, so long as it is the language of the sinner's heart, "I pray thee have me excused," it will only increase, and render more just, and aggravated, his condemnation.

Besides, heaven is uniformly represented, as a place of perfect and unmingled holiness. The only employment of all its inhabitants, is the service of a holy God. "They rest not day nor night, saying Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Where then

could the sinner, with such an heart as we have shown that he possesses, find the least enjoyment in heaven? He has no love for God: He takes no pleasure in his service in the present world. He derives no enjoyment from the Sabbath, nor from the sanctuary. From what then, would he derive his happiness, were he admitted to that world which is "but one vast sanctuary; and its everlasting ages, but one Sabbath?"

Regeneration then, is necessary for the same reasons as an atonement. It is indispensable, in order that sinners may be received to the favour of God consistently with his character, and the best interests of his kingdom. It is essential also to the happiness of men, both in the present and in the future world. (See question on the necessity of the terms of salvation.)

In proof of these points, which have been briefly stated, the Scriptures are full and explicit. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit." *a*

Q. By what is regeneration generally preceded?

A. Regeneration, in the case of adults, is always preceded by what is termed conviction. Some conversions are more sudden, and preceded by a shorter period of convictions than others; and some are preceded by convictions far less powerful than others: Still, it is doubted whether there are any cases, where this change is ever effected without them. The conversion of the Apostle Paul was as sudden and as powerful as any of which we have any account. It is as dif-

a John iii. 3, 5, 6.—Rom. viii. 6, 7.—Gal. vi. 15.

ficult to see how his, could be preceded by conviction, or a work of the law, as any that can be named; and yet, in the account which he has given of his own experience, he has described a powerful work of conviction in the clearest and most unequivocal terms. "For I was alive without the law once; but the commandment came, sin revived and I died." [a] The law of God is undoubtedly the only instrument in the work of conviction. Persons may be convicted who know but little about the law, and at a time when they are not sensible that any part of it is before their minds; yet, it will be seen, that no one can have a feeling of genuine conviction, but in view of some principle which is drawn either directly or indirectly from it. A correct view of the law will lead any sinner to see that he is guilty; but this, in many cases, does not amount to that conviction, which is certainly followed by conversion. Sinners often remain for years, while this rational conviction is cherished in the mind, as careless and as unfeeling apparently, about their future condition, as the beasts that perish. But when they are led by the Spirit of God, whose office it is to convince of sin, to see the purity and equity of the law, and its extensive and unyielding claims, they not only see, but they *feel* that they are guilty in the sight of God. What was before but a loose, unfeeling speculation, is now a solemn and interesting reality.

That sinners must have these clear views, and that these views must be followed by a deep and undissembled feeling of contrition, before their sins can be consistently pardoned, will appear evident from the following considerations:

1. They will never turn from sin unto holiness, until they feel something of the odiousness of sin, and discover in some degree, the beauty of holiness.

2. Grace, in the pardon of sin, can never be seen and duly

[a] Rom. vii. 9.

appreciated, till sin has been seen and felt, to be "exceeding sinful." To pardon the sinner before he has these views of himself, is to pardon him before he sees the need of it; and of course before he is prepared to prize the grace of God.

3. The honour of the divine character requires, that sin should be felt by the sinner, to be "an evil and a bitter thing," before he can be consistently forgiven.

With regard to the nature of conviction, we would further remark that its prominent traits are usually different at its different stages. At the commencement, it is generally marked with strong and terrifying apprehensions of the danger of sin; but as the work becomes genuine, the mind is chiefly employed in viewing its unreasonableness, or guilt. After having clear views of the *danger* of sin, sinners often return to their former careless and sinful course of life; but this rarely if ever happens, when they have seen and felt its *guilt*.

Nothing is more common, than for sinners to feel that conviction is so entirely the effect of the Holy Spirit, that there is no possible encouragement for the use of means;—that they are no more likely in a course of the most honest and persevering exertion to be the subjects of it, than if they indulge in a course of the most thoughtless and unfeeling neglect. These impressions are imbibed without reflecting one moment on the nature of the mind, or the commands of God. Is it not a fact, to which every man can attest from experience, that on every other subject, just in proportion as he voluntarily and honestly fixes his mind upon it, he will be enabled to feel in view of its importance? Although it is not believed that genuine conviction is ever produced without the Spirit of God, yet it is so often the result of a close, voluntary application of the mind to an examination of the law, as must convince us that it is not for want of ability or capacity,

and thus, leave such as are careless and unconvicted, entirely without excuse.

Q. Is the subject of regeneration, sensible of the time when it is effected?

A. There are doubtless some cases in which the impressions are so powerful as to authorize a probable conjecture in regard to the particular time; but that in most cases it cannot be known, is evident from the following considerations:

1. The Scriptures have given us other criterions, by which we are to determine, whether we have been the subjects of this change. We are to be known by the fruits we yield, and to determine whether we bear the fruits of righteousness, we are directed to examine and to prove ourselves. All such directions would be useless, if we could invariably fix upon the time when our hearts were regenerated.

2. Many who have professed to have a certain knowledge of the time of their conversion, have apostatized, and have given the most undeniable evidence, that they were deceived. Not only so, but in many cases they have acknowledged that they had been deceived. Such instances ought to convince us at least, that there is danger of being deceived, and that we ought not to expect that we shall be able to fix on the moment when we were the subjects of regeneration. There are no doubt multitudes, who because they cannot refer to some remarkable dream, or supernatural appearance, as evidence of the precise time when their hearts were changed, dare not hope; while their lives furnish the most satisfactory scriptural evidence, that they are the children of God.

Q. What are some of the best evidences of regeneration?

A. By this question, the subject under consideration, is brought where it becomes more deeply and personally interesting to every reader, than in all our previous remarks.

That there is such a work as regeneration—that the Holy Spirit is the agent by which it is effected—that it is essential to our happiness in the present world, if numerous and plain declarations of Scripture will prove any thing, must be believed. But as we are directed to examine in order to determine whether we have been the subjects of this change, and as this very direction implies that there is danger of being deceived, and as deception in this case would be attended with the worst of all consequences; with what honesty and prayerful solicitude should we proceed to answer this enquiry! With a view to give this subject a discussion, as careful and deliberate as possible, we will mention in the first place, some things, on which many place great dependence; which do not in fact, afford any thing like decisive evidence.

1. No circumstances whatever attending the *time* of our supposed conversion, can be relied on as decisive evidence. There is a variety of circumstances on which many place great dependence. With some, their terrors were so great, and produced such effects on their bodies—with others, their views of their danger were so clear, and these were followed by views of the Saviour so animating, that their joy was unspeakable.—Others, have had such supernatural appearances, or prophetic dreams.—Others, while borne down under a sense of their guilt, had some passage of Scripture peculiarly adapted to their case, suggested to their minds.—Others, had views of the Bible, of Christians, of duty, &c. which were so entirely new. Now, most or all of these things have been experienced in cases of genuine conversion; and most or all of them have been witnessed, in cases where every hope that was built upon them, was nothing but delusion. What is there in powerful conviction, or clear views of sin and danger, that is evidence of a change of heart? It is what often, and in most cases precedes regeneration, but is not regeneration itself.

What do we discover in supernatural appearances, or dreams, that indicate a change of heart? They show that the mind is in a state of great agitation; but they do not afford the least indication of love to God, or to holiness. They often exist to a high degree, where the plague of the heart remains entirely undiscovered. Strong emotions of supposed gratitude or love, may undoubtedly exist without a change of heart. Only let the sinner, who is so far sensible of his guilt and danger as to be anxious, by any means whatever imbibe the impression that his heart is changed and his sins forgiven, and will he not, for the very reason that he is anxious, be led to rejoice? Is it at all difficult to conceive, that with his ignorance and agitation of mind, he may not be able to distinguish between this selfish gladness, and real love? His heart may be warmed with the thought, that the Saviour should regard so great a sinner as himself: But this fire is one of his own kindling. So we may remark concerning the occurrence of a promise, or a passage of Scripture to the mind. If the mind were not peculiarly anxious, or agitated in view of that subject, such an occurrence would be considered as nothing uncommon.

2. No uncommon zeal, or exactness, in performing the external duties of religion, will furnish any certain evidence of a new heart. The Apostle Paul, before, as well as *after* his conversion, was zealous and exact.—So were the Pharisees, whose lives were nothing but a tissue of opposition to the character and cause of Christ. Indeed, there are many motives beside a love to God and the souls of men, which may lead to a punctilious and persevering discharge of external duties. Such a course may seem necessary to maintain a hope, support a party, or to appear eminent in piety.

3. Great confidence, is no decisive evidence of conversion. Some persons, immediately after their supposed conversion,

have so much confidence, in the belief that they are Christians, that they affect to pity all that are ever disturbed with doubts. As we should naturally expect, if we look at the state of mind, that is always produced by the operation of the Spirit, such persons are of all others the most liable to be deceived. What is it to be under conviction, but to see the character of our hearts? And the more clearly we see the nature of our hearts, the more we shall be inclined seriously to question, whether the Spirit of God can dwell in them. These remarks perfectly correspond with innumerable facts. Such as at first have these clear and correct views of the deception and guilt of sin, which lead them to be extremely suspicious of themselves, are such as generally *hold on their way* and wax stronger and stronger; while such as are bold and confident, as generally, show that they have never seen the plague of their own hearts.

4. Neither is it certain that our hearts are changed, if we are doubting, and often led to examine the question, after we have ventured to indulge a hope. A sinner who has indulged a hope without any just grounds, may be led so far to examine the subject, as to discover many things in the character of the Christian, that he does not possess. When once an impression of this kind is seated upon his mind, his sins may trouble him for the same reason that they trouble the convicted sinner;—because they expose him to the displeasure of God.

Thus it is plain from these observations, that we may have many things that resemble the experience of the real Christian, and many things which he actually experiences, and still know nothing about regeneration. We are now secondly to mention some of the best evidences of a change of heart. And

1. In every instance of genuine conversion, there is a new

disposition. The desires of the soul are very properly denominated a relish. This relish in the natural man is wholly selfish, and therefore sinful. He loves his wealth, his honours, or his fellow creatures, for no other reasons, than that either directly or indirectly, he expects some benefit will accrue to himself. Now although in regeneration this sinful relish is not wholly destroyed, there is another entirely opposite in its nature, implanted in the soul. The real convert has a love or a relish for objects, in which he once took no pleasure or delight. He has a love for the character of God. He rejoices in his government. To contemplations on these subjects, he frequently turns, as to his choicest pleasures. We have already shown while speaking of the necessity of regeneration, that these subjects are extremely unpleasant to the natural heart. While the language of the sinner's heart is, "Depart from us, O Lord, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," that of the regenerated man is, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" The same difference is seen in the affections of the converted sinner toward the *law* of God. The law, when received as the only standard of right and wrong, and as expressing with perfect justice the claims of every being in the universe, appears to the real convert inexpressibly delightful. There is produced in regeneration, a new disposition toward the people of God. The Christian may have had friends among the people of God before his conversion, but he did not love them on account of their religion, or their attachment to Christ. The sinner that is considerate and regular, may venerate the man that he deems a consistent Christian; but this is merely the decision of his judgment or conscience. He derives for himself, no inward pleasure or satisfaction, from those things which he is ready to eulogize in the Christian. But it is this part of the Christian's charac-

ter more than any thing else, that endears him to the convert. He is humble—he is penitent—he loves the duties of religion, and the souls of his fellow-men. These are things with which his own heart is pleased, and of course it affords him great pleasure to see them in others. The convert has a relish for religious duties, such as prayer, reading the Bible, and a devout attendance upon the ordinances of the gospel, to which he was before a stranger. He delights in these duties the more, as they admit him near to God, the supreme object of his affection. On this account he is led to place a high estimate on the duty of secret prayer. It gives him an opportunity to hold communion with the dearest friend he has in the universe. This is a duty in which the man who is religious only to be seen, or to keep alive a trembling hope, will not for any considerable length of time, with cheerfulness and pleasure persevere. Now this love for things which in their nature are spiritual and holy in the real convert, it ought to be observed is not produced by a belief that his sins are pardoned, and his future happiness secured. In many cases it is clearly and distinctly exhibited, before the subject has a glimmering of hope. Nothing is more common than to hear persons express themselves with great admiration, in view of the law of God—its penalty—the character of God, &c. while they have not the least suspicion that their sins are pardoned.

In proof of what has now been stated, that in regeneration is produced a love to objects of a spiritual and holy nature, the Scriptures are full and explicit. "I delight (says the Apostle Paul) in the law of God after the inward man." David breaks out in the language of rapture, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good."

2. Meekness and humility in all our conduct, is an evi-

dence of regeneration. Pride is one of the most prominent traits in the character of the natural heart. It is a sin to which there is in every heart, a strong and unvarying tendency. Its existence, as it is condemned by the first and plainest principles of reason and religion, is a convincing proof of the depravity of our race. The question which the Apostle Paul suggested to the Corinthian Church, who by their pride had forsaken him and had become painfully divided among themselves, it would seem, is sufficient to place the impiety and unreasonableness of this sin in such a light, as to make it an object of universal disgust. "Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" If we are dependent for all that we now are, and for all that we hope in future to be, what grounds have we for pride? Still pride is universally cherished, and a multitude of soft terms are given it, that its deformity may not be seen. It is the object of real humility to oppose it, in all its various and deceitful appearances. But there is no one among all the Christian graces, that is more liable to be counterfeited than humility. What the Apostle calls *voluntary humility*, is only pride in disguise. When a Christian is really humble, he is like Moses when he came down from the mount: "*He wist not that his face shone.*" He sees so much of the glory and perfection of the divine character, and so much of the imperfection of his own, that while he sinks into the dust, he views himself as an unhumbled man. From this humility, as well as from the love he bears toward his fellow-men, his conduct is marked with a tenderness and gentleness, which is peculiar to the Christian. Without meekness, we cannot with propriety be denominated Christians; because we do not follow Christ. "Take my yoke upon you, (says the Saviour) and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." *a*

a Mat. xi. 29.

3. Nearly allied to this is another trait which composes an important part of the character under consideration. It is a readiness to forgive. In no one thing is the spirit of the gospel more directly at war with the spirit of the world, than in this. We might naturally conclude that a proper sense of our own imperfections—a love of benevolence toward our fellow men—a view of the example of Christ, and a confident trust in the wisdom and justice of God, would induce us to leave with cheerfulness all the provocations and abuses which we experience, unto the decision of the judgment day. But there is another consideration which cannot fail to exert a more powerful influence on the mind of the real Christian, than either of these. It is a view of that forgiveness, that he hopes God has manifested toward him. This argument is presented in the most powerful and advantageous point of light by the Saviour himself. *a*

4. Another important evidence of regeneration is seen, when the heart and the understanding, have a proper influence upon each other. The understanding, with many irreligious men is correct, but it has little or no control over the heart. There is a material defect in this respect, with many who profess to be the disciples of Christ. Some have clear and accurate views of doctrine and practice, and yet are cold and without feeling. They are ready to criticise and condemn every man, who does not come to their standard of orthodoxy. Others, make the whole of religion to consist in *feeling*. Clear and consistent views of doctrines, with them are of no importance. Such men consider those seasons, when they imagine that they are the subjects of some supernatural impulse, as their most favoured moments. On these feelings, they place more dependence in determining the path of duty, than upon a deliberate and careful examination of

a Mat. xviii 23—35. See also Eph. iv. 32.

the word of God. Without attempting to decide which of these classes exibit the best evidence of real piety, we may easily show, that there is an important defect in both. No arguments are necessary to show, that religion is not merely speculative and intellectual. What are love, repentance, and joy, but affections of the heart; and what is religion without them? On the other hand, for what purpose is the Bible given—why does it reveal a knowledge of the character of God, and of our duty; and why are we endowed with reason and judgment, if we are not to seek for correct views, and if our hearts are not to be controlled by them? All the powers of the mind are bestowed upon us for some important use, and may be employed in the service of God. The whole of our religion, is denominated by the Apostle a *reasonable service.* *a* Is it not impossible to see how we can yield a service like this, without the co-operation of all the powers of the soul? What is the obedience of the gospel, but a cheerful and entire compliance, with whatever is believed to be duty, in view of all that God has revealed? If all the faculties of the mind are duly employed in the service of God, there will be a beautiful symmetry in all our conduct. There will be a zeal, but it will be according to knowledge. There will be a rational and consistent belief, but it will be accompanied by the warm approbation of the heart, and a steady and active discharge of every duty.

5. There is in every real Christian a growing and unextinguishable desire, to be more and more like God. Something of this nature seems plainly intimated in many passages of Scripture. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" *b* By the expression, *shall never thirst,*

a Rom. xii 1. *b* John iv. 14.

we are not to understand that they will cease to relish, or desire, the water of life; but that they will never thirst in vain, as an ample supply will be ever at hand. "They shall not thirst any more, for the Lamb which is in the midst of them, shall lead them unto living fountains of water." *a* It is plain from the expression, "it shall be in him a well of water springing up," &c. that the effects which are produced by the Holy Spirit, such as love, joy, and gratitude, will be on the whole, perpetual and increasing. David, of whose religious experience, we have the most detailed and particular accounts of any of the Scripture saints, speaks often of *thirsting* after God. "O God thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land." "My soul followeth hard after thee: Because thy loving kindness is better than life." *b* It is easy to account for this inward and growing desire after God. It is produced by a feeling sense of our encreasing obligation, and by a participation of his love, shed abroad in our hearts. It is this, by which the Christian is led to be grieved and dissatisfied with himself, that he is no more conformed to the pure and holy commands of God. "My soul breaketh, for the longing it hath unto thy commandments at all times. Behold I have longed after thy precepts." *c* This longing desire to be conformed to the commands of God, will continue and increase in his children, till they are perfectly transformed into his image. "Then shall I be satisfied when I shall awake in thy likeness." *d* Whether we have this mark of piety, we must each of us determine for ourselves. But if we are careful to examine, it cannot be difficult to arrive at a just decision. It cannot be difficult to determine, whether sin be so grievous and offensive to us, and the holy character of God so delightful, that we are tried and burdened with our-

a Rev. vii. 16, 17. *b* Ps lxiii. 1. *c* Ps, cxix. 20, 40. *d* Ps. xvii. 15.

selves, and long to rise and dwell in his presence, and bear his image forever.

6. What is usually called *disinterested love*, is an important evidence of a new heart. The unregenerated heart, is supremely selfish. Every thing in the universe, as far as it can be affected by his influence, is subordinated by the sinner, directly or indirectly to his interests. But when the heart is changed, it has a real and unfeigned love for the best interests of others. This is "that love that seeketh not her own, but her neighbour's good." In the exercise of this love, more than in any thing else, do the children of God resemble the Redeemer. But it may be asked, how shall we determine whether we have this love? The best evidences of its existence in our hearts, are such as the following:

1. A willingness to make sacrifices for the good of others. This was the prominent trait in the benevolence of our Saviour.

2. Such earnest desires and prayers for the good of others, as are known only to God.

3 Feeling a deep and lively interest in the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of souls. This is that evidence which angels and the spirits of the just made perfect exhibit, when they rejoice at the repentance of a sinner.

These are but few of the evidences that might be exhibited, and that would be profitable for every one to examine. But as solemn and important as the subject may be, the limits of this work will not allow us to dwell any longer upon it. We may however observe, that in describing what are termed *the fruits of regeneration*, it will lead us to exhibit some things, which are among the most clear and decided evidences.

Q. When are we the subjects of this change, if ever?

A. During the present life. It is surprizing, the Scriptures are so plain on the subject, that there should be the least

necessity of answering this question. The reason undoubtedly is this: The Scriptures so often and so explicitly represent this change as essential to the happiness of the soul, that many find themselves unable to still the voice of conscience, until they can believe that it is a change effected at death; and of course, a subject in which they have no present concern.

That the present is the only period of trial, or probation, with which we shall ever be favoured, will be shown in its proper place. Without adverting to that subject, we may show by a few passages of Scripture, that regeneration is a work which is effected in the present world. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord." *a* "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" *b* These passages, with a multitude of others, show that some at least, experience this change in the present life. But if it be an operation which is effected at death, what shall we understand by that command, in which we are required to make to ourselves new hearts? "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit." *c* Does this passage mean that we must put an end to our lives, and by that means effect our regeneration?

Q. What are the effects of regeneration?

A. We have been unavoidably led, in giving the evidences of regeneration, to describe many of its effects. To render the subject more plain and easy to be understood, we observe that faith, repentance, love to God and love to men, joy in the Holy Ghost, and submission to the will of God, &c.

a Titus iii. 36. *b* 1 Cor. vi. 11. *c* Ezek. xviii. 31.

are the immediate effects of this change. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, faith," &c. *a* "By grace ye are saved, through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." *b* "If God peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." *c* "Then hath God also to the Gentiles, granted repentance unto life." *d* "For the fruit of the Spirit is in *all goodness* and righteousness and truth: Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." *e*

Q. What are we to understand by gospel faith?

A. The word *faith*, is sometimes used to signify that system of truth, that is contained in the Scriptures. It is used in this sense where Christians are directed to "Contend earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints." *f* It sometimes implies merely the rational conviction of the mind, and because it is not productive of gospel obedience, is called a *dead* faith. *g* But that faith, which is connected with salvation, implies not only the assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel, but it is accompanied by the cordial approbation of the heart. It is called by the Apostle, "faith that worketh by love." *h* Beside this, in many passages of Scripture it seems to import a cordial trust, which in view of the promises and the perfections of God, is reposed in him. Saving faith, by one celebrated divine, is thus defined:—"It is such a persuasion that Christ is the great Messiah, the Son of God and the Saviour of man, and such a desire and expectation of the blessings he has procured under that character, as shall engage us cheerfully to commit ourselves to him in his appointed method of salvation, with a disposition cordially to devote ourselves to his service in all the ways of holy and evangelical obedience"* By another it is described thus:—"Saving faith is an understanding, cordial re-

a Gal. v. 22. *b* Eph ii 8. *c* 2 Tim. ii 26. *d* Acts xi. 18. *e* Eph. v. 9, 10. *f* Jude 3. *g* James ii 17. *h* Gal. v. 6. * Dr. Doddridge's Sermon. "Salvation by Grace," page 7.

ceiving the divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ and the way of salvation by him, in which the heart accords and conforms to the gospel."*

That these definitions include saving faith is obvious, and it is equally obvious that they are unnecessarily prolix. It is believed that this subject, having so often been a subject of learned and laboured altercation, is thought by most readers to be deep and difficult, when the spirit of inspiration intended it should be considered one of the most plain, in the whole Bible. If it be not presumptive to hazard a thought on a subject which has undergone so many and so careful investigations, we should say that gospel faith is nothing more than *an honest confidence, that God is sincere in his word.* In order to explain and support this definition, let us adopt a supposition that is often made, in the investigation of other subjects. A number of men are convicted of some capital offence, and after having received the sentence of death are confined in prison. Some benevolent and important individual offers to make a sacrifice that will support the honour of the government, while such as comply with certain conditions, are restored to favour. The conditions with which the prisoners are to comply, are the following: They are to acknowledge on their knees, that the law which they had violated was a just and important law—that they were righteously condemned, and plead for pardon in the name of their benefactor. When the message is announced to the prisoners, is it not plain that no one will sincerely comply with these conditions, until he honestly and firmly believes in the sincerity of the government in giving the message?

Should any of the prisoners allege, that "the government knew that its law which they had violated was unjust, and on that account had made this arrangement; or, that the law

* Hopkins' System, Vol II page 39

was just, but the mercy of the government would not allow its penalty to be executed, whether they complied with the conditions of pardon or not; or that the law was just, but the conditions of pardon were in every sense beyond their power;" it is obvious that although they might be said to believe in some parts of the message, they had not a particle of faith in the sincerity of the government, nor would their faith lead them to make the least exertions, with sincerity, to comply with the conditions. Being anxious to live, some of them might feign a compliance, and others might be so agitated on the subject as to deceive themselves, and think they were sincere, while they had no real penitence at heart for their sin, nor friendship for the government.

On the other hand, it cannot be conceived that one individual, who has a firm, unwavering confidence in the sincerity of the government, will delay a single moment attempting at least, a compliance. By his believing simply in the sincerity of the government, the following things would be implicitly contained in his faith:

1. That his sin was great, and that no apology could be made for it; for he could not believe that a sacrifice could be sincerely made for a sin, which might be justly excused.

2. That a benevolent regard existed in the feelings of his benefactor and the government toward him, and that they were anxious his life should be spared, if it could be done without injury to the government.

3. That there were encouragements for him, however guilty he might be, to attempt a compliance. He could not believe that he had been sincerely invited to do what he was in every sense unable to do.

4. That the government would vindicate itself without fail, and unless he should soon comply, it would execute upon him the penalty of its laws, according to the demand of jus-

tice. He could not believe that they would sincerely attempt, by a sacrifice, to support the honour of a law so that such as complied might be pardoned, unless its penalty were just, and might be justly executed upon such as did not comply. Although these things were clearly implied in his faith, still he might not be aware of it, and might be led to act in view of a few of the leading points in the message. Honestly viewing it as a real message, and the government sincere in sending it, he would hear in it the language of warning and invitation. This would be enough to excite him to the most earnest and vigorous endeavours, to comply with the terms of pardon.

If we look at the amazing ignorance of many who give us the best evidence of having an active and living faith, we must believe that gospel faith, or that which is essential to salvation, is something that is far more simple, than men of deep thinking and metaphysical discrimination, have made it. The child of but few years, or the heathen who is just let into a knowledge of the gospel, sees in it, if he have true faith, that he is guilty and justly condemned, and that God is just and holy; and yet, like the father of the prodigal, he sees him advancing toward him with a smiling countenance, proclaiming pardon and reconciliation. This definition of faith it will be seen, agrees with that of the Apostle: "He that cometh to God *must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder* of them that diligently seek him." *a* When by the Holy Spirit, the affections of the heart are changed, the darkness of the mind removed, and the things of Christ presented before it; "faith that *works by love*" *b* must be the immediate effect.

Q. Is faith a voluntary act of the mind?

A. It is difficult to conceive, by what men have been led so generally to doubt the affirmative of this question, unless

a Heb. xi. 6. *b* John xvi. 14, 15.

it be from a loose examination of the operation of evidence, upon their own minds. On most subjects, this method, if pursued with care and perseverance, may be the most happy and successful to obtain a correct knowledge of the mind; but on this, no one can be more liable to mislead us. The decisions of the mind on every question, appear to us to be simply according to the weight of evidence. We feel a consciousness, that the mind is as necessarily carried by the real weight of evidence, as a scale by the heaviest weight. "How can I help believing (it is frequently asked) when evidence is presented?" To account for this appearance while it is wholly illusory, we need only reflect, that what gives an evidence weight in the mind, is something which the mind itself is unable to see. The bias, or prejudice of the mind, is no more likely to be seen by it, than a jaundiced eye to discover what it is that gives to every surrounding object, its peculiarity of colour. If one neighbour be prejudiced against another, he will be more ready to believe unfavourable reports about him upon the same quantity of evidence, than if his mind were entirely unbiassed; still, he will be wholly insensible by what the decision of his mind is carried, and will feel a consciousness within himself, that he decides according to the intrinsick weight of evidence. These remarks, are sufficient to account for the impression, that faith is an irresistible assent of the mind to the weight of real evidence, however common it may be, allowing it to be false. We have room to state in addition, only a brief outline of the evidence, by which we would prove that the mind is voluntary in believing.

1. It is a sentiment, which, in practice, is admitted by all. If our neighbour, through prejudice, readily seize upon an unfounded report, by which our characters are slandered, and act upon it as true, do we consider him innocent? Is it not

common, if not universal, for mankind in such cases, to complain of unfairness and prejudice? What meaning can be attached to such words as *bias, prejudice, credulity, partiality*, &c. as they are commonly used, unless mankind do in practice believe, that the mind is active and free in believing? The practice of mankind, it must be admitted, is a much surer test by which to determine the real sentiments of their hearts, than their professions.

2. We are commanded to believe. "Repent ye and believe the gospel." *a* "This is his commandment that we believe on the name of his Son." *b* But if faith be not a voluntary act of the mind, how can it be consistently an object of command? Can we form any possible conception how any thing can be justly commanded, which is not dependent on the will? It would sound strange to hear a child who might be infirm, or sickly, commanded to be in health; but the absurdity would be no greater than to command men to believe, if men are not voluntary in believing.

3. We are threatened with a fearful punishment if we do not believe. "He that believeth not shall be damned." *c* "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." *d* Can we believe that he who is "just and holy in all his ways," would annex a penalty as awful as this, to a command with which it is impossible for us to comply?

4. We are conscious, that while we are collecting and examining evidence on any question whatever, we are voluntary. We form a resolution to turn our attention to a subject, and examine its arguments; or we resolve for the present to postpone the examination; the whole process is governed by the will. We are voluntary not only in determining to look for the evidence on a subject, but in giving to it its just weight. It is an observation of an eminent and discriminating divine, and one that is corroborated by our own experience, "That

a Mark i. 15. *b* 1 John iii. 23. *c* Mark xvi. 16. *d* John viii. 24.

it is as easy, and as common, for the mind to turn its eye from the *power* of evidence, as from the evidence itself."* When the bearing of evidence is to prove what we anxiously wish to disprove, while we reluctantly examine it to save the appearance of fairness, how active will the mind be in seeking for evidence to oppose it, or to discover some defect in it, by exhibiting which, its whole weight may be destroyed! How different is the process of the mind, in a case where the point to be proved is one with which we are pleased, and which we are anxious of course should be proved!

5. It is attributed by him who knows and judges the hearts of men, to improper and unjustifiable reasons, if we remain in unbelief. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." *b* "How can ye believe, seeing ye have honour one of another?"

6. If faith be not a voluntary act, there is a numerous class of passages in the Bible, to which we can affix no possible meaning.—Such as the following: "Behold I work a work in your day which *ye will not believe.*" *c* "Behold they *will not believe* me." *d* "If I tell you, *you will not believe.*" *e* To complain of men because they *will not believe*, when it does not depend on the will, whether they believe or not, is an exhibition of absurdity which we hope no one would be willing to charge upon the Author of the Bible.

Q. What is evangelical repentance?

A. There is no one of all the graces of the gospel, which it is more important that we should understand, than repentance; and yet, there is no one about which we are more liable to be deceived. It is universally represented in the Scriptures, to be a *sorrow for sin.* It is plain however, that sorrow may be excited in view of sin, from different motives. Judas manifested sorrow on account of his sin. His sensa-

* Dr. Dwight *b* 2 Cor. iv. 4 *c* Hab. i. 5. *d* Ex. iv. 1. *e* Luke xxii. 6, 7.

tions of sorrow were such, as produced a powerful effect on his mind; and yet it is evident that he had no genuine repentance. His sorrow arose from a strong apprehension of the consequences of sin. It was like that of the thief, who regrets that he has stolen, merely because he is detected and exposed to punishment. Such a remorse as this, it is very obvious, may powerfully effect the mind, from principles that are purely selfish. There is nothing in such a sorrow as this to prevent the repetition of the crime, if all fear of detection be removed, and the temptation be renewed. In such cases, the object of sorrow is not *sin*, but its *consequences*. Such a kind of repentance indicates no change of disposition. The heart is as well pleased with the nature of sin, if it were not for its consequences, as it ever was. From the repeated confessions, and temporary reformations, that we witness among men, we are led to conclude that there is much of this kind of repentance in the world. Genuine repentance, differs from this, in that it has the *nature* of sin for its object. There may be, and doubtless often is, in the minds of the really penitent, a fear, or dread, in view of the consequences of sin; but this is not the only, nor the greatest reason with them, why it should be avoided. So far as their hearts are renewed, they have a feeling of opposition to its nature. It is committed against a being who is so amiable, and perfect, in all his attributes—it is the violation of a law that is so perfectly just and important to the kingdom of God, that aside from all the threatenings of God against it, they view it to be odious. In proportion as the character of the Saviour appears precious and delightful, the sin of neglecting him and of abusing his mercy, will appear hateful.

Repentance is not, as many suppose, a hatred against all sin. Such a hatred as this exists in the minds of angels; and yet no one would contend that angels repent. It is then, an unaffected hatred, or sorrow, in view of *our own sins*, and

is generally the effect of contrasting our characters with the holy character of God.

Q. What is love?

A. Love to God and our fellow creatures, has been sufficiently explained in what has been said on regeneration, (pages 127, 133.)

Q. What is genuine submission?

A. It is a submission of all our interests for time and eternity, without condition or reserve, into the hands of God. There is a resignation which is substantially like this, in every instance of genuine conversion. All cavilling and complaining are relinquished, and the claims of God are cordially admitted. Submission, is an exercise for which the Christian has frequent occasion, after his conversion; as he is often the subject of trials and afflictions. This exercise has also its counterfeits. In many cases it is evidently, as in the case of Pharaoh, merely the effect of constraint. Sometimes in view of death, and often by adverse providences, the stubborn will is so far bowed down, that the sinner submits, merely because he must. Some have supposed that submission, implies a state of mind which is pleased with the nature of every trial and affliction, however painful it may be; and that the mind should never be affected, nor the passions excited by any event whatever. Such however was not the submission of our Saviour. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and at various other times. The Apostle Paul, in giving a description of genuine resignation, compares it to the feelings which a child should exhibit, when corrected by a faithful parent. *a*

From this it would seem, we ought to be deeply sensible in our afflictions, that our heavenly Parent is dealing with us: Still we ought not to indulge in immoderate grief, but receive his corrections as the evidences of his parental care and affec-

a Heb. xii 9.

tion. "My son, despise not thou the chastising of the Lord, nor faint thou when thou art rebuked of him." *a*

Q. Are these effects of regeneration, necessary to salvation?

A. They are so essential, that salvation is never offered, unless some one of them, either directly or indirectly, is made an indispensable condition. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." *b* "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." *c* "Every one that loveth, is born of God. He that loveth not knoweth not God." *d* "Submit yourselves therefore to God." *e*

The reasons why pardon cannot be extended to sinners, since an atonement has been made, without a compliance with these terms, have been already given.—(See pages 111, 119.) It is necessary only to remark here, that the view we have now taken of these effects, or graces of the gospel as they are usually called, cannot fail to convince us that they are essential to salvation. Each one of them, evidently implies a temper of mind, without which it would be impossible for sinners to be happy, were they in heaven. A mere declaration of pardon, cannot alter the disposition of the heart. Were sinners admitted to heaven, and a free and indiscriminate act of pardon should issue from the throne, (if it were possible) still, *without confidence in God, a disapprobation of their own sin, a love to the character of God,* or *a submission to the divine will,* they would be more unhappy than they are in the present world. Those attributes in the character of God, which now excite their bitterest opposition, will there be seen with a lustre inconceivably brighter, and eternally increasing.

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a Heb xii 5. *b* Mark xvi. 16. *c* Luke xiii. 3. *d* 1 John iv. 7, 8. *e* James iv. 7.—See also Acts xvii. 30.—1 Cor. viii. 6.—1 Cor. ii. 9.

2. It has been shown also that if sinners were to receive pardon, without a compliance with these terms, the character of God would suffer. It would be in effect, justifying his enemies, while, if it were in their power, they would ruin him and his government. To suppose, that in order to prepare the way for a measure like this, he would consent to the sacrifice of his own Son, is to suppose that he has abandoned the cause of holiness forever. But, if the atonement has manifested the hatred of God toward sin, as much as it would have been manifested by the punishment of the guilty, as has been already shown, then every sinner who complies with these terms, or in other words, condemns himself, loves God, and justifies every measure of his government, may be consistently pardoned and restored to his favour. Although it is common for men to hope for salvation, with but little or no regard to these conditions, merely because Christ has made an atonement for sin, is it not plain from these remarks that every hope of this kind, is more baseless than a dream?

In perfect accordance with this, the Scriptures universally and clearly assert, that pardon and salvation can be received only by complying with these terms. "God hath so loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth on him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." *a* "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation *to them that obey him.*" *b* "For by one offering he hath perfected forever *them that are sanctified.*" *c*—[See also the passages quoted at the beginning of this answer.]

Q. Which of these graces are first, after regeneration?

A. The Holy Spirit, in our opinion, has no where given a decisive answer to this question: We wish therefore, not to be understood as giving our opinion with decision or confi-

a John iii. 16. *b* Heb v 9. *c* Heb x 14.

dence. It will appear from what has been already stated concerning faith, repentance, love, &c. that they imply each other, and all evince the same temper of mind. They are exercises of the renewed mind, in view of different objects. In view of sin, especially when contrasted with the holiness of God, the exercise of a renewed heart will be repentance; in view of Christ, it will be faith; and in view of the will of God, submission. We see no necessity from the nature of things, nor from the word of God, of believing that either of these graces is invariably first. It must depend, it would seem, on the object that is before the mind, at the time when the heart is changed. If this object be Christ, the first exercise will be faith. If it be sin, it will be repentance, &c. In confirmation of this, it may be observed, that as salvation is offered on a compliance with either of these terms, it is but reasonable to conclude that either may be first. The testimony of experience, as far as it can be relied on, will certainly lead us to the same result. So far as it is possible for them to determine, or to conjecture, as to the time when their hearts were changed, different Christians give us an account of very different exercises, as those which immediately followed their regeneration.

Q. What are the consequences of regeneration?

A. The consequences of regeneration are in the present life, *adoption*, *sanctification*, and *perseverance* unto the end; and in the world to come, *life everlasting*.

Q. What is adoption?

A. It is being received into the family of God, and admitted to the enjoyment of all the privileges of his children. The phrase adoption, is taken from a custom that has existed in every nation, and in every age. When children are taken by parents to whom they do not belong, and made heirs to their estate, and in every other respect treated as children they are called children by adoption. Men by nature are

alienated from God. They are enemies to his character and government. By regeneration they become reconciled to him, and in the act of faith are admitted through rich grace to all the privileges of his children. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them who believe on his name." *a* The subject of adoption is one of which the Scriptures make frequent mention. It is one which presents the astonishing grace of God in the salvation of sinners, before the mind, in the most delightful point of view. When we contemplate our meanness as creatures, and our vileness as sinners, to think, that we may be admitted to enjoy the privileges, and sustain the relation of children, to a being so infinitely amiable and exalted as the eternal Jehovah, we must view it as grace and condescension, for which we can find no adequate language.

Q. What is sanctification?

A. To sanctify, literally signifies to make holy. It is sometimes used in the Scriptures, where the meaning is *to set apart*, for a holy use or purpose. Thus the "unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband," &c. Here it is plain that the unbelieving wife in consequence of her connexion with a believing husband, by the appointment of God is considered holy in a relative sense. It was in this sense that the Sabbath was sanctified; it was set apart for a holy purpose. Inanimate things are said to be sanctified. The word is more generally used to denote the continuance and completion of the work of grace, which is begun in regeneration. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." *b* From this passage it is plain that the Apostle considered this work in reference to his brethren, as already partially accomplished, but not wholly. The same remark is true concerning the prayer of our Saviour for his disciples. "Sanctify them

a John i. 12. *b* 1 Thess v. 23

through thy truth, thy word is truth." *a* The agent in sanctification is universally considered in the Scriptures, to be the Holy Spirit. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit." *b*

Q. Can no evidences be given by which we may know whether we have been regenerated?

A. If by this question it be meant whether evidence can be furnished while we are formal and lifeless, in the services of religion, and while we are inquiring for evidence only that we may continue in our course with less disquietude; it can never be furnished us. Or rather it may be said, that this selfish speculation, proceeding from no better views, furnish but too strong evidence that we are strangers to this important change. That there is such an attainment as the faith of assurance, is evident from the Bible; but it is equally true, as is observed by President Edwards, "it is always accompanied by a sense of dependence." It is an important mark of the genuineness of our hopes that their strength should ever be in proportion to our faithfulness and engagedness in the service of God. To enjoy the faith of assurance is a privilege for which we should never hope, only by uncommon spirituality and perseverance.

Doddridge on Regeneration.—Hopkins' System.—Wines' Inquiry.—Erskine on Faith.—Dwight's Theology.

SECTION X.

Natural Ability.

Q. Has the sinner by nature, power to comply with the terms of life?

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a John xvii 17. *b* 1 Pet. i. 2.

A. Some remarks have been already made, which have an indirect bearing upon this subject, in answering the question whether sinners are active or passive in regeneration. It has been shown that we are liable from the circumstances in which we are placed, to receive incorrect impressions on this subject. Being constantly in the habit of investigating physical operations, and having the agency of the Spirit in producing this change, represented in the Bible by metaphors drawn from such operations; we are liable to receive the impression that the operations of the mind, when it is subject to the influences of the Spirit, are as passive as those of matter. As multitudes resort to the plea of inability, to justify them in their neglect of the gospel, the discussion of this subject must be deemed important. Such are the views of many upon this subject, that they might be exhorted to create a world with as much propriety, as to make to themselves new hearts; or, (which is the same thing) to comply with the terms of salvation.

After a brief explanation of the terms, which are generally used in this investigation, a number of arguments will be stated, to show that men before they are converted, have all the power that they need, to comply with the terms of life.

By the term *power*, is not meant an ability independent of God. We have no power of this kind, to do any thing whatever. Neither is it meant by the word *power*, a *moral* ability. There is nothing that can with propriety be called moral, in the sense in which the word is used here, but that which is praise or blameworthy; but a *power to do* that which is praise or blameworthy, it is plain, cannot of itself be either. Men may be criminated for misusing the powers with which they are endowed; but they are not criminal for possessing powers, nor are the powers of themselves criminal for being abused. A willingness to comply

with a requirement is usually called a moral ability; and the want of it, a moral inability. Whatever may be meant by this willingness, it must be in relation to the powers of the mind, an effect. It is obvious that it is not essential, to the existence of the mind. But it must be improper to call that in any sense power, which is nothing but the action, or effect of power. The terms *moral ability*, and *moral inability*, are often used in compliance with custom; but ability or inability, cannot with propriety be called moral.

The opinion of President Edwards on this subject, a subject which he has investigated with so much candour and ability, will do as much toward deciding it as can be done by any human authority. After a laboured explanation of the words *ability* and *inability*, he observes, "The word signifies only a natural inability in the proper use of it. It cannot be said according to the ordinary use of language, that a malicious man, let him be ever so malicious, cannot hold his hand from striking, or that he is not able to show his neighbour kindness; or that a drunkard, let his appetite be ever so strong, cannot keep the cup from his mouth. In the strictest propriety of speech, a man has a thing in his power, if he has it in his choice or at his election."* After this decision, he continued to make use of the term, because custom had so long employed it, his purpose could be better answered by it, although it is evidently incorrect, than by any other. It must be plain from this quotation, and the remarks which have been made, that in correctness of language it cannot be said that a power to do that which is moral, and which alone is moral, can of itself be moral. To say that we lost our natural power in Adam, but that we have moral power conferred upon us by Jesus Christ, is to use terms without meaning.

We are commanded to believe—to love God—to repent

*Edwards on the Will, part 1, sec. 4.

&c. and what we mean by power in the case before us, is an ability in dependence on God, to comply with these commands. It is sufficient proof in the minds of some, that we are destitute of this ability, because they find in the Bible such declarations as the following: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." *a* "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God." *b* To show that these passages afford no argument directly to that point, we need only remark, that the Scriptures were written for the benefit of men. In order that they may be understood, they are written in a language with which men are best acquainted; and of course in a language that is most common among them Nothing is more common among mankind than the use of such terms as *cannot*, and *could not*, &c. when a strong disinclination, and that only, is implied. Thus, I *cannot* throw myself into a well—I *cannot* strike a friend—I *cannot* hold my hand in the fire till it is burned, are phrases similar to what we often hear, but no one would understand by such expressions, a real inability. In compliance with this custom, the term *cannot*, in a great number of instances in the Bible, is used to mean simply a strong disinclination. It is said of Joseph's brethren that "They hated him, and *could not* speak peaceably to him." *c* The Apostles, when arraigned before the Jewish Council, declared; "We *cannot* but speak the things we have seen and heard." *d* Said the Jews to the Saviour, "This is an hard saying, who *can* hear it?" *e*

The reader is now requested to look at the passages cited above, which are thought to import a real inability. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." *f* From the nature of the duty, which men are said to be unable, in this passage to perform, and from the use of the word *draw*, is it not evident that nothing more

a 1 John vi 44. *b* Josh. xxiv 19 *c* Gen xxxvii 4. *d* Acts iv. 20. *e* John vi. 60. *f* John vi. 44.

is intended to be understood, than a determined unwillingness? The mere *drawing* of the Father it is plain, would not supply any want of real ability. Besides, this exposition perfectly harmonizes with what the Saviour has said on the same subject in another place. "Ye *will not* come to me that ye may have life." *a* Again, another passage to which many appeal with a view to prove a real inability, is the following: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spot? then might ye who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." *b* As conclusive as this may seem at first sight, in proof of a real inability, there is no other inability intended or implied by it, but what is occasioned by being accustomed to do evil.

Having made these observations on the phraseology which is used upon this subject in the Bible, some arguments will now be adduced to prove that sinners have all the ability they need, to comply with the terms of salvation: And

1. That kind of inability under which sinners are said to labour, in the Scriptures, is represented as their crime. "Having eyes full of adultery, and *cannot* cease from sin." *c* "Ye *cannot* serve the Lord, for he is an holy God." "How *can* ye believe, seeing ye have honour one of another?" *d* If the inability of sinners be real, their criminality cannot consist in it; and on the other hand, if it consist merely in a strong disinclination, is it not a clear proof that they possess all the ability which their case requires?

2. The requirements of God, in their most perfect and extensive form, are limited to the ability of men. There are no commands in the Bible, which sinners are more ready to plead their inability to obey, than those which are contained in the divine law. But it would seem from the phraseology

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a John v. 40. *b* Jeremiah xiii. 23. *c* 2 Pet. ii. 14. *d* John v. 44.

employed in the requirements of the law, that it was intentionally adapted to their capacity. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all *thine* heart, soul, might, mind and strength." *a* It would be a strange inference from this passage, that sinners are required to love God with a might or strength, which they do not possess.

3. God has commanded sinners to make to themselves new hearts. The support of this statement does not rest on a single passage of Scripture. When an impenitent sinner is required to repent, or an unbeliever to believe, what is required in these cases, but to have a new heart? Commands of this import in the Bible, are numerous. *b*

4. Men are threatened with future and everlasting destruction if they do not believe.—(See page 140.) Can it be believed while we cherish proper feelings toward the Judge of all the earth, that he will command us to do that which is not within our power, and threaten us with everlasting punishment, if we do not comply?

Q. If sinners are able to obey the commands of God, wherein do they need a Saviour?

A. It is not asserted that they are able to make an atonement: This is not required. Since an atonement has been made, they are only required to comply with the terms on which its benefits may be received.

Q. If men have all the ability they need to comply with the divine commands, why are the influences of the Spirit necessary in order to their salvation?

A. The agency of the Spirit is necessary to make them *willing*. When they are invited to the gospel feast, "All, with one consent, pray to be excused." *c* It cannot be difficult to see what would be the consequences, if the Holy Spirit were to leave them to their own course.

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a Deut vi 5.—Mark xii. 30. *b* Mark i. 15, and vi. 12.—Acts xvii. 30. *c* Luke xiv. 18.

On the whole, to plead any kind of inability as an apology for the neglect of duty, it must be evident from what has been observed, is to make a daring attack on the equity and justice of the divine administration. To say that he has commanded his creatures to perform impossibilities, and supported those commands with penalties the most awful, of which the human mind can form any conception; is an exhibition of impiety, common as it may be, especially if it be done understandingly and be not the effect of ignorance, with which, that of the slothful servant, who accused his lord of being an "austere master," *a* was comparative innocence. He accused his lord of exacting what was unreasonable, but not what was impossible; nor did he accuse him of supporting his unreasonable demands by the most fearful threatenings.—"Wo unto him that striveth with his maker." *b* "He that reproveth God, let him answer it." *c*

Edwards on the Will.—Park-Street Lectures.—Wines' Inquiry.—Dwight's Theology.

SECTION XI.

Election.

Q. What is meant by the Doctrine of Election?

A. We understand by the doctrine of election, that some men were chosen in Christ, "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." *d* Or it may be thus expressed:—Some men were "Chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." *e*

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a Math. xxv. 24. *b* Isaiah xlv. 9 *c* Job xl. 2 *d* 1 Peter i. 2 *e* Eph. i. 4.

Q. What evidence have we of the truth of this doctrine?

A. In answer to this question, we remark, that we approach the subject before us, with feelings which are, in many respects peculiar. Not that we view the doctrine as more important than any other, though we deem every doctrine as plainly revealed, and as closely connected with the character of God as this, important. Not that we suppose a formal assent to our views of this doctrine to be essential to salvation; though we are firmly persuaded, that when the doctrine is clearly understood, and examined without prejudice, it will be believed by every candid and enlightened mind. The peculiarity of our feelings in view of this subject, arises from the fact, that the doctrine should be so undeniably supported, with evidence sufficient to prove any other point, in the whole compass of theology; that it should be indissolubly connected with many other things, which are cheerfully and universally believed, and that belonging as it does, entirely to the administration of Jehovah, it should excite in the hearts of so many, such a spirit of bitter and violent opposition.

As the proof of this doctrine, is very similar to that with which the doctrine of the decrees has been supported, our remarks upon it may be brief. It has been observed, that this doctrine is indissolubly connected with other doctrines, which are cheerfully and universally believed. The course we shall take, in the present investigation, will be to exhibit some of those doctrines with which it is connected; and then establish the connexion with the doctrine in question. There is scarcely a doctrine in the whole Bible, in the belief of which, mankind are more universally agreed, than the IMMUTABILITY of God. It is so plain, that no dependence could be placed upon him, if he were mutable, and his immutability is so plainly asserted in the Bible, that it is questioned by very few, if any. Indeed, what security could we have, that one

among all his exceeding great and precious promises, will ever be fulfilled, if it be possible for him to change? Again, if it be possible for him to change, he cannot be infinite. If he change, it must either be necessary to render him perfect, or by that change, he must become *imperfect*.

Again, if it be possible for him to change, then he cannot have a perfect knowledge of all future events. If all future events were perfectly known, there could not be, in the nature of things, any occasion for a change, or any cause to produce it. But it must be seen at once, that if he have not a perfect knowledge of all future events, he is like his creatures, growing in knowledge. And if his knowledge is increasing, it is impossible to evade the conclusion, that there was a time, when he knew nothing. It must be acknowledged then, that "He is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever." *a* "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" *b* What must we suppose of the following declarations, if God be not unchangeable? "I am the Lord, I change not." *c* "God is not man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he shouldrepent; hath he said, and shall he not do it?" *d* But it is unnecessary, on a point like this, to multiply arguments.

The next doctrine which we would exhibit as connected with the doctrine of election, that is universally believed by all who conscientiously believe in the Bible, is, that regeneration is the effect of the Holy Spirit; or if it should be preferred, it may be stated thus, that every sinner is dependent on God for conversion, sanctification, and everlasting salvation. It is universally acknowledged that such is their dependence, that not one sinner would ever be regenerated and saved, were it not for him. If this be not true, and if we do not cheerfully acknowledge it, for what do we pray? If it be not true, what do we make of the promises contained in the

a Heb. xiii. 8. *b* Job xxiii. 13. *c* Mal. iii. 6. *d* Num. xxiii. 19.

Bible, which relate to the outpourings of his Spirit? Was not something done on the day of pentecost by the Spirit of God? And is it not equally certain that something essentially similar, is done by the Spirit in every conversion? In short, if there ever were, or ever will be, a sinner saved without his assistance, his salvation cannot be of grace. With these sentiments, first, *That God is immutable*, and secondly, *That he does convert and save sinners*, the doctrine of election as we view it, must stand or fall. He who admits them, (and who does *not?*) admits in *essence*, this doctrine. It certainly must be plain and undeniable, that if God be unchangeable, and does convert and save sinners, he always meant to do it. Whatever he does, towards the salvation of sinners, he *always* meant to do. This view of the argument presents before us the doctrine of election, in a just point of light. From this it is plain, that if we would ascertain what God has determined, with regard to the salvation of sinners, we must look at what he *does*. If he employ various means to bring them to repentance, such as admonitions and invitations; and in every thing treats them as free moral agents, it is all according to his previous design. We see no possible way to evade the force of this argument, without setting aside the Bible and every correct view of the divine character at a stroke. Lest it should be asserted that the burden of proof in this argument, rests upon human reasoning, though we have shown it to be supported by the Bible, we will now cite a few out of the many passages of Scripture, in which the doctrine is unequivocally established.—"As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." *a* "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." *b* "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to

a Acts xiii. 48. *b* Eph. i. 4.

himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." *a* "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." *b* "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.." *c*

Q. Is not the purpose of God in election arbitrary?

A. If we mean to imply, by the term *arbitrary*, as it is often understood, *tyrannical*, *oppressive*, or *without reason*, nothing can be more erroneous or unjust. If we mean by it, that the great Jehovah acts according to his own pleasure, or from motives entirely within himself, the sentiment may be admitted, though the *word* is objectionable. We object to the word, because it is so often used when applied to men, as implying something that is capricious or unjust; that when it is used in reference to the conduct of the great Jehovah, it leaves an erroneous impression on the mind.—That God, in choosing some to everlasting life, acts according to his own pleasure, is plain from the following passages of Scripture: "Having predestinated us, &c. according to the *good pleasure of his will*." *d* "Having made known, &c." "Who worketh all things after the *counsel of his own will*." *e* But if we are unwilling that he should act according to *his own* pleasure, is there any other being, to whose pleasure we would wish to have him conform? Are not his perfections, as they are revealed in the Scriptures, sufficient to give us in relation to every thing he does, the most perfect satisfaction?

Q. Does not this doctrine make God a respecter of persons?

A. By no means. The view we have given of this doc-

a Eph. i. 5. *b* ver 11. *c* 1 Tim. i. 9.—See also Rom. viii 28. 29. 30.—Mat xxiv 24.—John xvii. 2. 6.—1 Cor. iv 7, and 1 Pet ii 9 *d* Eph i 5 *e* ver 9. 11.

trine, is the only ground, as we conceive, on which his character can be vindicated against this objection. Let us inquire what is to be understood by the term. If we carefully examine the Scriptures, we shall see, that, to have respect to persons, uniformly means *to bestow favours upon some men, and not on others, on account of something which they possess, of which others are destitute.* Says the Apostle James, "My brethren have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons. For if there come into your assembly, a man with a gold ring with goodly apparel, and there come in also, a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, are ye not then partial in yourselves?" *a* When Peter was convinced by a sheet let down from heaven, that the gospel was designed for the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, he exclaimed: "Of a truth, I perceive, that God is no respecter of persons, But in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." *b* What can be more obvious, than that the Apostle meant, that God, in the bestowment of his favours, was not influenced by national distinctions, nor by any of those acquirements in which the Jews were inclined to pride themselves? That he respected men of *every* nation according to their real characters? In all these instances, there is no reference to that alteration or change of character, which had been produced by him. That this is the meaning of the phrase, wherever it is used throughout the Bible, may be seen by looking at the passages, here referred to. *c* If we suppose, that in bestowing unequal favours on his creatures, from motives within himself, the great Jehovah is guilty of this charge; it will be impossible, on any ground whatever, whether we believe the Bible

a James ii. 1—4 *b* Acts x. 1—25. *c* Lev. xix. 15.—2 Chron. xix. 6—7—Rom ii 11.

or not, to vindicate his character. He has given the gospel to men, and not to the fallen angels. He has given it to some nations and not to others. He has given to some men greater powers of mind, and better opportunities to improve them than to others. He has given to some, health and plenty; and to others, sickness and poverty. Indeed, it is not possible, to contemplate any family, neghbourhood, town, or nation, but what we are met with stubborn facts, in proof of this point. Now if we contend that he is influenced in making these distinctions among men by any acquirements, or by any goodness attached to their personal characters, of which he was not the cause; it will be impossible to clear him from this charge. But if, as we have already shown, from the mass of men equally corrupt, and ill deserving, he takes whom he pleases, and makes them the heirs of his grace, how can it be said that he is guilty of respecting their persons? It is not on account of any thing that he sees in them, that renders them the objects of his choice. If, as those who are most ready to urge this objection, against the doctrine of election usually suppose, that he be influenced by some foreseen goodness, such as morality or repentance, which was not the effect of his Spirit, and on this account they become the objects of his choice, he is certainly guilty of this charge; He has respect to their persons.

Q. If the doctrine of election be true, how can it be shown that God is sincere, in freely offering salvation unto all?

A. We can form no conception from the fact, that God chooses to give some men repentance, and not others, how he should be thought to be insincere in freely offering pardon and acceptance unto all, unless it be, because he knows they will refuse. It is said by some that knowing as he does, with unerring certainty, that some will continue to reject the offers of salvation, the offers cannot be made to them with the

least degree of sincerity. If this objection have any weight, it bears equally on every scheme, in which the foreknowledge of God, is admitted. There is no denomination of christians, who admit the truth of the Bible, or who cherish any consistent views of the divine character; but what acknowledge the prescience of God. The Arminian believes that all will not repent, and embrace the gospel, and that it is perfectly known to God, what individuals will continue to reject. If he do not admit this, he must, as we have already shown, admit that there is an increase of knowledge with the great Jehovah, and of course, that there was a time when he began to learn. But he would doubtless reply, that the knowledge of God, does not affect the agency of man, and as the atonement was sufficient for all, and all were freely invited and had sufficient powers to accept, the offer may be perfectly sincere. Precisely the same answer would we give. But it is possible that this objection may be urged by those who deny that God will ever make any discrimination. To such, we would reply, that to view this subject in a correct point of light, we must dismiss from our minds, all ideas of past or future. With God, all things which to us, are past, present, or to come, are all present. "One day with him, is as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day." The beginning and the end of the world and every interme diate period, are equally before him. Hence he has styled himself, the "I AM." Doubtless, all events occur in the mind of Jehovah, in a certain order, which, for distinction's sake may be called the order of system, or the order of nature. According to this order, one thing is before, or after an other, just as it is a cause, or an effect. According to this order, the apostacy of man must have been before the provisions of the gospel were made, and these, before the invitations were given. In the same sense, the universal rejection of the gospel must have been previous to the election of some

to the obedience and salvation of the gospel. All these things lie before mind of the Deity, as the different parts of a scale before us, when either end is equally near us. This view of the subject then, in which the great Jehovah appears, while he is offering pardon to such as refuse, to be acting a mere farce, is occasioned by our ignorance of his existence. It arises entirely from a habit of supposing that the relations of *before* or *after*, are the same with him, as with us, or that his existence, like ours, is successive.

Q. But if it be admitted, that all things are present with the Lord, and that what according to the order of time is called foreknowledge, has no influence upon the agency of man, still how can it be just in God, to make some the objects of his favour, and not others?

A. That God bestows unequal favours upon mankind, is a truth of which we must become, by one single look at the world, firmly convinced. To this point, we have already brought arguments sufficient to set it at rest. (See page 160.) But we would inquire, on whom, does this discriminating influence of the Holy Spirit operate unjustly? On those who reject and are lost? But is God under obligation to convert them? Would he, after he has freely offered them salvation, and they have rejected, be unjust to leave them to their own choice? If so, their salvation cannot be of grace, because it is that, to which they are entitled on the footing of justice. This doctrine then, cannot be unjust to such as perish. It is presumed, that no one will contend, that it will operate unjustly, in reference to the righteous. But he that spake, as never man spake, has given this question a plain and unequivocal decision. So long as he inflicts punishment upon no one, beyond his desert, every cavil that may be suggested, in view of the unequal distribution of his favours, will be forever answered by that single question: "Have I not a righ

to do what I please with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? (*Math. xx.* 15.)

Q. Does not the doctrine of election destroy the agency of men?

A. As this objection has been distinctly considered, while discussing the doctrine of decrees, to that answer, the reader must be referred, where he will find also, an answer to other objections; such as, that this doctrine is a discouraging doctrine, and renders means and exertions useless.

On the whole, every real christian, what ever may be his views in this world, when he arrives at the kingdom of heaven, will come cheerfully into this doctrine. He will there delight to ascribe his conversion, sanctification, and complete redemption entirely to God; and it will not detract in the least from the greatness of the mercy he has received, because he who bestowed it upon him, meant to do it, and *eternally* meant to do it.

Park-Street Lectures.—Edwards's Miscellaneous Observations.—Woods Letters.

SECTION XII.

Perseverance of the Saints.

Q. What are we to understand by the Perseverance of the Saints?

A. It is not meant when we assert that the saints will certainly persevere, but that they may be left to commit great sins. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon and Paul, were left to show very decidedly that they were imperfect, after they had become eminently pious. We do not mean that saints cannot lose for any periods of time, the appearance of holiness. It is however to be observed, that

they have no evidence that they are christians, when they exhibit no appearance of holiness in their conduct.

The most distinguishing graces of the gospel may be so successfully counterfeited, that saints can have no certain evidence of their adoption, no further than they have evidence that they walk in the path of truth and holiness. It is however most certain, that they may be real christians, while no distinguishing evidences are seen by men in their conduct. Man looketh upon the outward appearance, while it is the province of Jehovah alone to survey the heart. Men may have in their own minds the most deep and sincere repentance for their sins, while it may be concealed from others. David, and Peter, and many other eminent christians, for a time, lost all appearance of piety. The same fact is undeniably evident from the parable of the ten virgins. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bride-groom tarried, they all slumbered and slept," &c. *a*

Without referring to the custom to which this parable alludes, or, attempting to give it a critical explanation, we may notice the following things, as having a direct bearing on the subject before us, 1 Real christians may be asleep. "They all slumbered and slept. 2. Others may have the appearance of religion without the reality. "The foolish took their lamps, but *took no oil with them.*" "And they said unto the wise, give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out." 3 There may be a radical difference between men, when that difference cannot be discovered. Both the wise and foolish had lamps,

a Math. xxv. 1– 8.

and lamps may be seen; but both had not oil, and oil is not seen.

3. It is not meant by the perseverance of the saints, that such as have been born again, will be saved let them do what they will. It would be a contradiction in terms. We might with equal propriety assert, that they will certainly persevere, though they fall away.

4. It is meant by Perseverance, that all who are regenerated and made partakers of the grace of God, although they may be left to occasional imperfections, and to commit very aggravating sins; will be enabled so far to hold on their way as on the whole to wax stronger and stronger, till the work of sanctification be completed. In other words, it is meant, that "He which hath begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." *a*

Q. What evidence have we of the truth of this doctrine?

A. One argument may be derived from the fact, that God is determined to save some of our race. If any thing can be inferred concerning his designs, from what he has done; it is certain that he means to save some. If he has given his only begotten Son to die for sinners, if he has revealed the terms on which his merits may be applied to them, and if he has provided many mansions for the eternal residence of those to whom they are applied; we must believe that he has determined the salvation of some at least. The supposition that he has been at this expense, while in his own mind, it was uncertain whether a single individual should ever be benefitted by it; must be considered a base reflection upon his character. But if he has so far determined the salvation of any individuals, that their salvation is certain; it will be seen that upon every legitimate principle of reasoning, their perseverance is equally certain. We are brought to the same

a Phil: i. 6.

conclusion, by an argument to which we have already alluded, while discussing the doctrine of election. It was clearly and it is believed satisfactorily shown, that unless God be changeable, whatever he does, he had forever determined to do. That he does, by conviction, conversion, and by sanctification, save some, will not be disputed; and by consequence, the perseverance of such must be infallibly certain.

2. The truth of this doctrine is evident, from the metaphors which are used in the Bible, to represent the security of the Saints. In some passages our Saviour is called the *good Shepherd.* "I am the good Shepherd. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and I give unto them eternal life." *a* Other shepherds, while the shades of night are spread over them, by wolves and beasts of prey, may be robbed of their flocks; but who will say that he who never slumbers nor sleeps, whose eyes are to the ends of the earth, and who has laid down his life for the sheep, will permit them to be torn from his fold? When some adversary more wakeful and more powerful, shall attack the good Shepherd; then, and not till then may we reasonably entertain fears, that his sheep may be destroyed.

Again, such is the connexion between the Saviour and his church, that they are represented as being one body. "And he is the head of the body, the church." *b* "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." *c* The same idea is exhibited in a number of other passages. *d* If this metaphor does not represent the connexion between the Saviour and his people as being indissoluble, it would be difficult to find one that would; and indeed it would be difficult to frame a proposition, whether a metaphor be employed or not, that would exhibit such a connexion, in a more clear and

a John x 27. 28. *b* Col. i. 18. *c* I Cor xii 27. *d* I Cor x. 16. & xii. 18. Eph iv. 12.

conclusive manner. It is impossible for a body to lose one of its members, without becoming to some extent a cripple. How can we believe that metaphors, indicating a connexion as near and as strong as this, would be so often used in the Scriptures, if such a connexion did not exist?

Again, the children of God are represented as being incorporated with Jesus Christ, into one building. The apostle Paul observes to his Ephesian brethren who were Gentiles, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together, for a habitation of God through the Spirit." *a* Would that building be complete from the body of which one single stone should be removed? When one stone is removed, the second may be removed with the greater ease, and what security can we have if the adversary be able to remove one; that the whole temple will not be soon in ruins?

Again, christians are represented as belonging to the same family with the Lord Jesus Christ. They are called his brethren. Brethren of the same family, will not be very ready to give up each other to their common enemy, if they are able to prevent it.

3. Another important argument in the view of the candid, may be drawn from those passages, which seem to admit that real christians, may lose the life and appearance of religion to a lamentable degree; which at the same time, show us that they will not wholly apostatize. "A just man falleth seven times and riseth again" *b* "But God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; But will with the temptation make a way to escape." *c* This

a Eph. ii. 19—22. *b* Prov. xxiv. 16. *c* 1 Cor. x. 13.

passage very plainly implies that men may to a great extent, be drawn away by the influence of temptation, and yet, through the faithfulness of God may be prevented from final apostacy. The apostle Paul in his epistle to Timothy admonishes him to shun certain teachers, alledging that by their corrupt instruction they had "Overthrown the faith of some." How often is this passage cited to prove that saints may finally apostatize from the favour of God? The Apostle, as though he were aware, that such a sentiment by a careless reading might be drawn from his declaration, and as though he meant studiously to guard against it; adds in the next verse; "Nevertheless the foundation of the Lord standeth sure having this seal, the "Lord knoweth them that are his." *a* From this we have an undoubted right to conclude that the *faith*, which had been overthrown, was not a living, but a cold and dead faith. From this passage, it is also plain that although persons may have a faith, and may have for a while the semblance of religion, and finally apostatize; their apostacy is no evidence against the doctrine we are attempting to support.

4. All the perfections in the character of God, seem to be pledged for the support of this doctrine. In the passage we have just cited, the foundation on which the saints are built, is said to be as sure as the *knowledge* of God. "The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." The force of the Apostles argument in this passage appears to be this; as certain as it is that the Lord knoweth who are his; so certain it is, that they will continue to be his, and not make shipwreck of their faith. Who would call in question the knowledge of God?

The *power* of God is also pledged in support of this

a Tim. ii 18, 19.

doctrine. "Neither (says the Saviour) shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Here it will be seen that the Saviour has pledged his power. If any of his people should be lost, what is here stated could not be viewed as truth. But he adds, "My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." *a* Here, the power of the Father is pledged, and the foundation of his children is as secure, as Omnipotence itself can make it. He next observes, "I and my Father are one;" by which he undoubtedly meant to be understood that both the Father and the Son, are equally engaged to secure the perseverance of the saints.

We have now shown that both the knowledge and the power of God, are pledged for the support of his people. It would seem, did we not know how strangely the human mind can turn its eye away from the weight of evidence, that the passages we have now quoted, would remove all doubts, and set this subject among the undoubted and undisputed subjects of the Bible.

But, we have not only the knowledge and the power of God pledged for the security of his people, but his oath.—"Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." *b* The express object according to this passage for which the Almighty condescended to confirm his promise by an oath, was that those who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope setbefore them, *might have a strong consolation.* Something very similar to this is contained in the declaration

a John x 28, 29. *b* Heb vi. 18, 19.

of our Lord to his Apostles. "Because I live, ye shall live also." *a* It cannot be true that his people live for the same reason that he lives, unless their life is as certain as his. This passage cannot be understood to mean any thing less, than a solemn assurance on the part of the Saviour, that his people shall live. Now if an "oath for confirmation, is an end of all strife," *b* then an oath from him, for whom it is impossible to lie, and who is certainly able to carry all his determinations into effect, ought to close forever all debate on this subject. Such indeed was the effect which it did produce on the mind of the Apostle, for he immediately exclaimed, "Which hope we have *as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast.*"

5. Another and a very conclusive argument in proof of the doctrine in question, may be derived from what our Saviour has said, concerning the joy that is occasioned in heaven by the repentance of sinners. "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." *c* What rational ground can there be for such joy among the inhabitants of heaven when a sinner on earth repents, if it be not certain that every penitent will be saved, and if that certainty be not knwn? If it be not certain that every true penitent will persevere, their rejoicing is premature, and they may be only preparing themselves for disappointment. What but the confident expectation, that the repenting sinner will be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, and come at length to partake of their joy, could inspire among the redeemed of the Lord such raptures of joy? Are they ignorant of the scheme of salvation, and thus subject to disappointment? or, is every repenting sinner an heir of glory?

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a John xiv. 19. *b* Heb. vi. 16. *c* Luke xv. 7.

6. There are many passages of Scripture which speak with plainness and decision on this subject; but as we have not room to insert them, the reader is requested to look at those, to which he is directed by the references. *a*

Q. Are there not some passages which clearly imply that saints are in danger of final apostacy?

A. There are, we are cheerful to acknowledge many, an honest reading of which, will leave this impression on the mind.

"But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity,—in his sin that he hath sinned, shall he die." *b* "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." *c* "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself, should be a cast-away." *d* To show that these passages, though they plainly imply, that in one sense, it is possible for Christians to apostatise and perish, are perfectly harmonious in their meaning with the doctrine of final perseverance, we need only observe, that saints, when viewed by themselves, *are* liable to fall away. It is naturally possible, because they are capable of sinning, and of continuing to sin. But we are to remember that our evidence that the saints *will* persevere, is not founded on *their* ability to stand, but on the promise, that he who has begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. There is a counterpart to this sentiment, a view of which may serve to explain the point in question. It is generally believed, that sinners, in one sense, are able to repent. They have all the *natural* powers that are necessary. Of course, it is *naturally possible* for them to repent. But still,

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a Phil i. 6 1 Pet i. 5 Rom. viii 29—39. Mat. xxiv. 24. Luke x. 42. Job xvii 9. *b* Ezek. xviii. 24. *c* Heb. vi. 4, 6. *d* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

it is as generally believed, that no sinner *will* ever repent, unless he be drawn by the Spirit.

Q. If it be morally impossible, because God has secured their perseverance, for saints to fall away, how is it proper for him to address them, as though they were in danger?

A. There is the same reason in the divine conduct in this case, as in the case of the sinner, to which we have just alluded. It is admitted by all, that it is suitable for God to command sinners to repent, because they are naturally capable of repenting, though it is certain, that they never *will*, if left to themselves. The course of reasoning in support of this point is plain. It must be right for God to address them as agents, and require a service to which he was entitled, and which does not exceed their ability. All the commands and invitations of the Bible, are given to them on this principle. The same reasoning is equally clear and conclusive in case of the saints. What *God* means to do, or what he designs to do in preserving them, does not effect *their* duty. They are capable of serving him, or of falling away, and on the ground of this capacity, he admonishes them as agents, to take heed lest they fall. Besides, these admonitions are made a means in securing their perseverance; as in the case of the Apostle, while on his voyage to Rome. Although he had assured the crew, that the angel of God had informed him, that there should be no loss of any man's life, yet when the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, he declared expressly, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." This is a perfect illustration of the subject before us. God works by means; and in the case of the righteous, he will be careful that the means necessary to their perseverance, shall be adopted. It is to be observed, that all those passages, which intimate a possibility that Christians *may* come short of heaven, are hypothetical. "*If* they shall fall away,"—"*When*

a righteous man," &c. whereas, the promise of perseverance, has none of this uncertainty attached to it. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "*I give unto them eternal life, and they* SHALL NEVER *perish.*"

Q. Does not this doctrine encourage sloth?

A. It is not a little surprising, that an objection of this kind should come from such as have ever seen and felt, how feeble, and how liable they are, to wander from the path of duty, and of course, might know, (it would seem) how to prize the promises of God. "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." *a* What Christian that is longing to be more and more conformed to the image of his God, would draw from this promise, licence, or encouragement to sin? What was the effect it produced on the mind of the Apostle? "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." This was *his* inference, and if others from a promise like this, are inclined to draw motives to indolence and sloth, would it not furnish conclusive evidence that they had deceived themselves? Would it not prove that they were strangers to that grace that teaches us to deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust? This objection to the doctrine of perseverance, rests upon mistaken views of the grace of God, in its influence on the heart. It supposes that the Christian is not delighted with the service of God, in itself considered, and that he is governed wholly by a desire to secure his own happiness. It would be impossible to devise a representation, that would do greater injustice to the character of God. Such motives are no better than those with which we serve a tyrant, because we happen to be in his power. Were a child pleased with the character of his parent, with the nature of the service he

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a 1 Cor. x. 13.

had assigned him, and knew of no higher enjoyment than the prosperity of his interest; would a promise of assistance on the part of the parent encourage sloth and inactivity in the child? Such a sentiment is a libel on religion. Were it to prevail in heaven, it would freeze every heart, and close every song, and revive the storms and contentions of our world! With regard to the impenitent sinner, this doctrine, as we have described it, cannot have an improper effect on his mind. The promises of God, which relate to perseverance, must destroy the hopes of such as live in the allowed practice of sin. They must be convinced, that if they have apostatized, they never were the children of God. This was the inference the Apostle drew from the apostacy of some who had made a profession in his day. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us." *a*

Park-Street Lectures.—Edwards' Works.—Toplady.

SECTION XIII.

Means of Grace.

Q. What are the means of grace?

A. Every thing that is instrumental in conviction, conversion, and sanctification; such as the preaching of the gospel, reading the Bible, reflection or meditation, instruction of children, and prayer.

Q. What evidence have we that God is pleased to work by the use of means?

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a 1 John ii 19.

A. It is evident, it may be seen first, from the command of God. We are commanded to "Preach the gospel to every creature,"—to "Search the Scriptures,"—to "Examine ourselves," &c. We can form no conception of any other object to be accomplished by these means. This is the object of their appointment, as it is expressed in the Scriptures. The gospel is to be preached that men may *believe*. "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" a Children are to be trained up "In the way they should go, that when they are old, they may not depart from it." b Timothy was directed to instruct with meekness, those who oppose themselves, and for his encouragement he was assured that *peradventure*, God might give them repentance. c

2. The Scriptures assert in the most explicit manner, the sentiment now in question. (See question, What is the instrument in regeneration?) Besides, it would be impossible to conjecture for what purpose the Bible, Sabbath, or the preaching of the gospel was given us, unless it be for means of grace.

Q. In what manner must we attend to the means of grace, in order to enjoy the best prospects, that they may prove to be blessings?

A. To give a distinct answer to this question, it will be necessary to make some remarks on each of them separately. We shall pass over the manner in which the gospel is to be preached and heard, as this is a subject often investigated in the pulpit. On the manner in which the Bible is to be read, much might be said that would be useful and important. But the limits of this work will allow us to give but the outlines of the subject.

1. While we are reading the Bible, we should cherish continually, a sense of its *divine authority*. We should view

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a Rom x. 14. b Prov. xxii. 6. c 2 Tim ii. 25.

it as the message of Jehovah, written expressly *for* us, and spoken directly *to* us. It would be impossible, with an impression like this, to indulge, while passing over its sacred pages, a loose, speculating spirit. It would be our constant aim to learn its real meaning, & not to seek for ingenious methods of bending it to our preconceived opinions. As soon should we think, if the Deity were addressing us as audibly as he addressed Moses on Mount Sinai, of replying and dictating what would be proper and consistent for him to reveal, as to attempt to do away, or pervert, the plain and obvious meaning of his word.

2. It is important when we read the Bible, that we endeavour to *understand* it. No book on earth, it is believed, is read as much, in a careless and inattentive manner, as the Bible. It is read by many, merely to satisfy the demands of their consciences, that they may be able to say that they have read it. Children are often rewarded for reading it, just in proportion to the number of chapters they pass over in a given time. Let the contents of the Scriptures be ever so important, so long as they are read in this way, they only defeat the object for which they were given. They were given to teach us our duty, and bring us to the Saviour. This careless method of reading, while it makes us entirely satisfied with ourselves, deprives us wholly of this information. In this inattentive manner, whole chapters are often read by the master of a family, when perhaps, scarcely an individual has been sufficiently attentive to retain a single idea. It is firmly believed that the great objects for which the Bible was given, would be far better answered by having but few verses given out at every reading for the next, that the family might be able to investigate it, and to answer all the important questions, which it might suggest. Although it is true, that to understand some parts of the Bible, books are necessary which

are not within the reach of every family, yet so far as it is requisite in order to secure the best interests of our souls, so far, it is believed, it is within the power of every one to understand it, if they give it their serious attention.

3. The Scriptures should be perused *frequently*. It is a fact, which the experience of every man cannot fail to teach him, that his mind is affected by almost every object in proportion (to an important extent) to the time during which that object is before the mind. This plain principle which is common to our nature, must furnish every person who duly estimates the knowledge of the Bible, with one of the strongest motives for a diligent and persevering examination of it; while it perfectly accounts for the lamentable ignorance and indifference that we too often witness, with respect to a knowledge of the Scriptures. It is owing to the influence of this principle, that the minds of youth, are so often employed in trifling and useless reading, while the Bible is entirely neglected.

Reflection or *meditation*, it has already been observed, is a means of grace. Its importance may be inferred from the principle stated in the last paragraph. However important truth may be, we can no more expect that it will produce its desired effect on the mind without meditation, than that medicine will effect a cure, though it be never taken It is true that the instructions contained in the Bible, are perfectly adapted to our condition. They give us a knowledge of those subjects, which it is most important that we should understand, of which, we should otherwise be entirely ignorant. They teach us by what process we are to know ourselves, and to become reconciled to God. But unless they are read, and their truths made the subject of serious meditation, they will be of no more benefit to us, than a mine of gold is to its owner, while he lives and dies in perfect ignorance of its existence.

But the most important of all the means of grace, is *prayer*. If any of the duties of religion, are taught by the light of nature, it is prayer. It is a dictate of nature, that we should seek the assistance of him on whom we are dependent. It has been the opinion of some, that impenitent sinners are not under obligation to pray. For this opinion we find ourselves unable to account, unless it be taken from the declaration of Solomon, that "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination." With equal propriety we might infer that impenitent sinners are under no obligation to labour, because it is said that "The plowing of the wicked is sin." It is universally acknowledged to be a sin to till our fields or pursue any temporal avocation with no other motive than the gratification of pride; but no one infers from this, that sinners are not under obligation to labour, nor that their sin is not less than it would be, were they to neglect it. And if, while they have no better motives, their labour may be the *means* of good; why may not prayers which are offered with improper motives, be the means of good? If a sinner attempt to call on the name of Jehovah with a determination to retain his impenitent and unhumbled spirit, it would be nothing better than the most impious mockery. But if he come before him with no other spirit than that which is often produced by fear, the very attempt of itself, whatever may be his motives, may be a powerful means of bringing him to repentance. As it brings before his mind, the character of the Deity, he necessarily becomes more solemn and conscientious. It is here that the sinner often makes discoveries of the wickedness of his heart, to which he was before a stranger, and which bring him helpless and trembling to the arms of his Redeemer. But as a conclusive argument, that sinners are under obligation to pray, it may be observed that it would be a strange process of reasoning, by which we would prove that sin, or impenitence,

will release a man from his duty. Were he as perfect as the angels in heaven, it would be his duty while in this dependent state to pray. If we suppose, that sinning against God, has released him from this or any other duty, it would be virtually adopting the strange opinion, that sin may work its own atonement. On the subject of *secret prayer*, but few observations will be made. The man who does not believe himself under obligation to perform a duty as particularly, and explicitly described as this, cannot be a believer in the Bible. *a* It may, however, be remarked, that not a little depends on the manner, in which this duty is performed. It is believed, that if we habitually make it the first employment to which we turn our attention in the morning, we shall not only receive more enjoyment during the performance, as the mind will not be crowded with other objects; but the effects which it will leave, and the influence it will exert on the mind through the day, will be far more visible and important.

The same reasons evidently go to show the importance of visiting the closet frequently. In this way, an ascendency of spiritual thoughts and of spiritual influence over those that are worldly, will be maintained in the mind.

Q. What evidence have we that family religion, such as reading the Bible, prayer and religious instruction, is the duty of all parents?

A. The first argument which we would adduce, is drawn from the relations which the different members of a family sustain to each other. If there be such a thing as moral obligation in existence, it always attends the different relations in life. It is an inference obviously deducible from the light of nature, that, as children are dependent on their parents, it is the duty of their parents, by their example, and in every other way in their power, to endeavour to promote the best

a Mat. vi. 5, 6.

interests of their children. This, we trust, we shall be able to show, cannot be done, without giving them a religious education. As every family has a combination of interests, nothing can be more reasonable, than that they should be taught to worship God in that capacity.

2. Stated religious worship in the family, is the best method to communicate religious instruction. There is no influence which is as powerful on the minds of children, as that of parental example. In what manner can we plant an impression on the minds of our children so deep and lasting, that there is an invisible and Almighty Agent whom we fear and reverence, as by statedly bowing before his throne, acknowledging his grace, and pleading for his mercy? From what can they learn, that this is our opinion, while we neglect this duty? How can we, in any other way, so well teach them that they are dependent and dying creatures, and that they live on the mercy and compassion of God? When they hear these things feelingly and sincerely acknowledged, they have a better evidence, that we believe them, and one which will more lastingly affect their minds; than it is possible to afford them in any other way. Now let every parent seriously ask himself, whether it is a matter of little consequence, that his children should know that they are dependent on God, that they are sinners, and as such are going to his bar? Can he be willing, while he must be sensible that he is continually teaching his children by his own example, that which is comparatively of no consequence; to let them remain ignorant of the immortality of their natures, and the fearful and righteous destiny that awaits them? While he is anxious to make them comfortable and respectable in the present life, will he feel no interest in their welfare beyond the grave? In what way is it possible for parents to manifest an affection so rational and endearing, and one that is so likely

to win upon the feelings of their children, as to show them by their example, how dear a place the best interests of their souls occupy in their hearts?

3. Family prayer is a duty clearly inferred from Scripture example. It is not a little surprising that it should ever be plead as an apology for the neglect of this duty, that it is not expressly commanded in the Bible! After an explicit command to pray *always*, and *with all prayer*, *a* for parents to think of being excused, or to desire to be excused, when their examples are so influential in their families; is a painful indication that they have no proper sense of duty or the worth of souls. "Pour out thy fury (said Jeremiah) upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not on thy name." *c* It is said in prophecy, that in the latter day, when the Lord shall pour out a spirit of grace and supplication upon his people, the land shall mourn, every family apart." *b* "Moses was faithful in all his house." *c* "Cornelius was a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house,—and prayed to God alway." *d* But the example of the Saviour, is an argument which no Christian can wish to evade. Though he had no house, yet he had a family. "It came to pass, as he was alone praying, and his disciples were with him."

4. Family prayer is an important means of perseverance. It is often said, that prayer is the life of religion, and nothing can be more true; for whatever may be our pretensions, so long as we live without prayer, we are dead while we live. Though spiritual life may depend more on secret than any other kind of prayer, yet it will be seen at once, that there are many sins, which prayer in the family, will be far the most likely to prevent. What can be more likely to make a Christian parent feel the importance of walking soberly and

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a I Tim. ii. 1—9. *c* Jer. x 25. *b* Zech xii, 12. *c* Heb. iii. 2. *d* Acts x, 2.

circumspectly before his family, than the reflection that he has stood before them in the solemn attitude of prayer?

5. How is it possible without a steady and faithful discharge of this duty, to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? While, as it has been already remarked, the minds of children are more effectually influenced by parental example than by any thing else, what better are our examples if this duty be neglected, than those of worldly irreligious men? How can we expect that they will feel it to be their duty to pray, while they hear no acknowledgements to God of dependence, or of obligation from their parents?

6. Parents must give an account of all their opportunities to instruct their children, and the influence they have had it in their power to exert over them, at the bar of Jehovah. It is believed, that this consideration of itself, were it duly weighed, would be sufficient to remove all doubts, and lead parents to the faithful and persevering performance of this duty. While it is neglected, every parent must know, that he is cherishing the natural aversion of heart in the minds of his children, towards religion and its duties by the most effectual inducements, which it is in his power to place before them. He cannot take a more direct course to convince them that it is not hazardous, nor offensive to God, to neglect his service. What parent is willing to meet the account of a life spent in this way—a life devoted to the ruin of his children, at the great day of decision? How trifling must every apology for the neglect of this duty, appear in view of that day! Where is the parent who seriously reflects on that day, when he must meet his children, with all the opportunities he has enjoyed to instruct them, who can rest a moment in the neglect

of this duty, by saying that he has not the *requisite abilities*, or *that he has so long neglected his duty*, he cannot perform it?

Dwight's Theology.—Park-Street Lectures.—Doddridge's Address to Parents.—Orton on Prayer.

SECTION XIV.

Consequences of Death.

Q. What are the immediate consequences of death?

A. One of the immediate consequences of death, is a termination of our time of trial or probation. The word probation, is not used in the Bible, and on this account, many are inclined to consider all that is said about it, as a speculation which is wholly without foundation. The same objection might be made to the doctrine of a future state. The words *future state*, or *futurity*, are no where used in the Scriptures. We must be pitiably ignorant of the history of the world, not to know that language, in its common use, may change; and that new words and phrases may be adopted, whose meaning may be synonymous with others which have been used before them.

By a state of probation, we mean a time in which, we are allowed to act on trial for the retributions of the future world. It is a time in which we may choose life or death; with the assurance that according to our choice, will be our future condition. That the present is such a state, is evident from the parable of the unjust steward: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." The same sentiment is clearly exhibited in the parable of the

vineyard. In this parable, the time of trial is compared to the hours in a day. The invitations were given out, and such as accepted, went in during the twelve hours. When the twelfth hour arrived, they were called to receive their reward. Again; "Work while the day last, the night cometh wherein no man can work." The wise man observes, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." *a* Says the Saviour, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." *b* It is presumed that no one would contend that the direction here given, is that we should be in readiness for another state of trial; because, for the same reason that another will be needed, we cannot fail of being ready. Further, "The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." *c* The whole account of the rich man and Lazarus, is plain and unequivocal in the support of this sentiment. For what reason was the rich man denied the smallest mercy of which we can form any conception, if his opportunity to obtain the favour of God, were not irrecoverably past? Upon what principle could it be said, that he *had received his good things*, if his case were not hopeless? We know it is often said, that this is a parable. Should we grant it, must we suppose that it has no meaning? And if we set aside the plain and obvious meaning of this parable, why not that of every other? Again, we are explicitly and repeatedly told, that the account which we must render at the judgment day, will be *for the deeds done in the body*. *d* Can we suppose that men will be favoured with another time of probation after death, and that they will not be called to give an account for the manner in which they improve it? There can be no such period of trial after the general judgment. A

a Eccl. ix. 10. *b* Mat. xxiv. 44 *c* Luke xvi. 23, *d* 2 Cor. v. 10.

time of trial, supposes a time of reckoning; and without it, would be a sentence without meaning. As there are but few passages of Scripture which are ever brought forward to prove that there will be a day of grace or trial in the future world, we shall now give them a brief, but candid examination. The most important may be found in the first General Epistle of Peter. *a* "By which also, he went and preached to the spirits in prison." It is thought by many, that an account is here given of what the Saviour did after his death. But in order to understand the passage correctly, let the question be asked, *how* did he go and preach to the spirits in prison? The answer is, "*By his Spirit.*" If the question be, *when* did he go and preach to them? the answer is, "When once the long-suffering of God waited *in the days of Noah.*" The prison to which the Apostle referred, was doubtless, the prison of hell; and those disobedient persons to whom Noah, by the Spirit of Christ, was constantly preaching, while the ark was preparing; at the time the Apostle wrote, were in hell. "By which also he *went* and preached," here the past tense is used; "to the spirits *in prison*;"—this is in the present tense. That there is nothing unnatural in saying that the preaching of Christ, was by the person of Noah, is plain from this fact: Noah was called a preacher of righteousness, and in the first chapter of this Epistle, the prophets are said to have prophesied through the Spirit of *Christ*. "Of which salvation, the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time, the *Spirit of Christ which was in them*, did signify when it testified beforehand, the sufferings of Christ," &c. Now it is certainly as rational to suppose, that Christ should preach, as prophesy by his Spirit, through his prophets. This passage then, according to our views, may be explained simply by the help of the Bible itself, and the explanation is perfect.

a 1 Pet iii 18, 19, 20.

ly consistent with the grammatical construction of our language. Some reasons will now be given to show that the passage cannot be otherwise explained.

1. It would set this single passage in opposition to the rest of the Bible, as we have already shown.

2. Nothing can be gained, by supposing that Christ went after his death, and preached to the spirits in hell. If we *admit* it, what evidence have we, that one sinner ever *repented* under his preaching there? It is certain that he preached to many while on earth who did not repent.

3. No reason can be given why the Saviour should be said to preach in hell to the spirits that lived before the flood, and not a word about his preaching to any others.

In connexion with this, is another passage which is sometimes supposed to mean, that sinners are favoured with a day of trial after the present life. "For, for this cause, was the gospel preached to them that are dead." *a* The Apostle had been speaking of the unreasonable accusations of wicked men towards such as were real Christians, because they ran not with them to the same excess of riot. He then reminds them, that all must soon give an account to him, who is ready to judge the quick and the dead. "For, for this cause, *was* the gospel preached to them that *are* dead." That is, the gospel had been preached to those pious men, who were then dead, that they might experience the same censures and accusations from the men of this world, that the righteous did when the Apostle wrote his Epistle, but that they might live while they were subject to these reproaches, according to God in the Spirit, and thus be a standing reproof to their accusers. If we suppose, that the expression, "*Might live according to God in the Spirit,*" refers to the life in the world of spirits, it alters nothing, since it is plain, that the time when

a 1 Pet. iv 6.

the gospel was preached to them, *was, when they were subject to those evil censures*, and of course, when they were in the present world. Thus it is plain, that a candid construction of these passages, shows that they perfectly agree with the rest of the Bible, and do not exhibit the slightest indication of any other state of trial beyond the present life. Passages which are supposed to imply that the wicked will be released from the prison of hell, will be explained in their proper place.

Q. Do the souls of men exist after death, previous to the resurrection?

A. The opinion, that the soul sleeps as well as the body, is taken, probably, from the fact, that each appears to be dependent on the other, and from passages of Scripture like the following: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave, who shall give thee thanks?" *a* From the fact that the connexion between the mind and body is such, that one cannot suffer without affecting the other, there is a strong prejudice with many, in favour of the opinion that one cannot exist without the other. Another fact, differing however, but little from this, is, that the mind, in its general course, seems to keep pace with the body. When the body is young and active, so is the mind—when the body is old and feeble, the mind is so likewise. From this appearance, some, while they are convinced of the truth of the Bible, deem the opinion that the mind may exist without the body, as unphilosophical. In this way, many have been led to believe, that after death, the mind would continue to sleep till the resurrection. But if we look at this subject with care, we shall see that this argument is more spurious than solid. It is a fact, that the mind is sometimes most active, when the body is inactive; or at least, when its operations are only

a Ps. vi 5.

sufficient for the continuance of life. It is sometimes the case, that when the body is asleep, there are some faculties of the mind, which are very active. Besides, it is a well-known fact, that we may lose the use of one part of the body after another, till nothing but life remains, and yet the mind is not injured. But what forms the strongest presumption that the mind may exist without the body, is the *subserviency* of the body to the mind.

The body seems to be little else than a medium, or instrument, by which the mind accomplishes its designs, and makes itself known. If the mind wills to go to some other place, the body is the mere vehicle by which it moves. If the body be defective, if for instance one of the legs be lame, a staff answers the same purpose. And when our vision is imperfect, glasses become as real assistants to the mind, and are as really the instruments of conveying impressions to the mind, as the lens of the eye. By these remarks it is plain, that the body is the mere passive instrument, by which the mind accomplishes its purposes. How irrational to suppose, that the mind must cease to exist when it leaves the body, while the body itself remains! It may also be remarked, that the causes by which the life of the body is destroyed, do not affect the mind. If we watch the progress of an incurable disease, we shall see it constantly diminishing the powers of the body, but the mind remains uninjured to the last. Its conceptions are as clear—its emotions as strong, as they were in health. No dependence, therefore, can be placed upon that presumption, which is drawn from the connexion of the mind and body, that the former cannot exist without the latter. But this is a subject concerning which, we have no clear and decisive evidence, except what is drawn from the Scriptures. With regard to the passage we have already cited, and others of a similar character, they seem only to intimate, that in death,

we shall cease to praise God on the earth. Some of these passages merely state that all opportunity to secure the favour of God, will end at death. But there are many declarations in the Bible, which it seems impossible to reconcile with this opinion, that the soul sleeps. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, endeavoured at a certain time, to entrap the Saviour in his words. They put to him a case, where seven brethren, according to the law of Moses, had been married to one woman, and desired to know which would be the husband of the woman at the resurrection. The Saviour in answer, after telling them they had erred, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God, put them this question: "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you, by God, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." *a* Now this argument, by which the Saviour silenced these Sadducees, has no weight, (for in fact the sentence has no meaning) unless those Patriarchs whom he named, were then existing in the spiritual world. Again, the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Phillippians, tells them that he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which he considered far better for him; but for him to abide in the flesh, was needful for them. *b* Again, the Saviour observed to the penitent thief, on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." *c* Again, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the Saviour remarks, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: The rich man also died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments." *d* Again, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house

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a Mat. xxii. 23—33. *b* Phil. i. 23, 24. *c* Luke xxiii. 43. *d* Luke xvi. 19—.

which is from heaven." These passages, it is presumed, are sufficient to show what the voice of the Bible is on the subject.

Q. If it be admitted that the soul exists after the death of the body, and previous to the resurrection, does it go immediately to its eternal destination?

A. From the aspirations of the Apostle Paul, it would seem, that he expected nothing short of a state of perfect happiness, immediately upon leaving the world. "We are confident, I say, and willing, rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." *a* With this agree the passages that were quoted in answer to the former question: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." From these expressions, it is apparent, that if there be an intermediate state, it is one in which the saints will enjoy the immediate presence of the Saviour. On the other hand, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, would lead us to believe, that the entrance of the wicked into the prison of hell, would be as immediate as that of the righteous, to the presence of the Lord.

Q If the righteous pass immediately to the presence of the Lord, and the wicked to the prison of hell, will not the day of judgment occasion a partial suspension of happiness in one case, and of misery in the other?

A. It is according to the general representation of the Scriptures, that mankind immediately at death, enter upon a state of retribution. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that, the judgment," *b* Now if we suppose that the case of every individual, is known and decided instantly on his entrance upon the future world, and that the judgment of the great day, will be a time when this decision will be *publickly declared*, this seeming difficulty vanishes at once.

a 2 Cor. v. 8. *b* Heb. ix. 27.

With regard to the coming of the saints from heaven, and the wicked from the prison of hell, in order to be judged, as we know little or nothing about locality in the future world, and as the happiness of the one class, and the misery of the other, does not depend on *place*, it is a subject on which little can be suggested.

Q. What evidence have we, that there will be a resurrection of the dead?

A. The doctrine of the resurrection is so explicitly taught in the Scriptures, that but few who believe them, ever call it in question. Although it is apparent that if this doctrine be true, a future state must follow of course, yet unbelievers who attempt to disprove the latter, rarely attack the arguments which are brought to support the former. The only reason which can be assigned for this is, the arguments in proof of the resurrection, are so obviously decisive that nothing can be brought against them, that bears the appearance of plausibility.

Something may be drawn, it may be remarked in the first place, from analogy, in support of this doctrine. There is a change which we witness every year in the appearance of nature, which is distinctly analogous to this doctrine. During the winter, nature all around us assumes a barren and lifeless appearance. Were it not for experience, we should not indulge a suspicion that the earth could ever again be clothed with vegetation, and swarming with insects. The same analogy may be seen in the transmigration of many insects; and also in the changes we experience, in passing from a state of sleep, to that of wakefulness and activity. But,

2. All direct arguments in support of this sentiment, are drawn from the Bible. The Apostle Paul has undoubtedly taken the most effectual method to prove it, of which we can form any conception. In the 15th chapter of his first Epis-

tle to the Corinthians, he reasons upon this subject with great clearness and strength. The only argument on which he relies, and which he plainly shows is decisive, is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. *a* This reasoning, and these declarations of the Apostle, as they show that he firmly believed that the doctrine of a general resurrection, must stand or fall with the resurrection of the Saviour, if we admit that he was inspired, must place the truth of this doctrine beyond all dispute. With regard to the arguments that evince the resurrection of Christ, as we have already examined them, (see pages 33—35) and the limits of this work will not allow us to repeat them, we must refer the reader, after we have given a summary view of them, to that examination.

1. The absurd and contradictory account which was given of the body of Christ by his enemies, after it was in their possession. Although it was for their interest, if the account of his resurrection were a falsehood to expose it, and although they must have been abundantly able to do it, yet, all the information they give concerning the body is, that his disciples came and stole it away. We are here left to the alternative of believing either the testimony of men asleep, brought to prove that a band of Roman soldiers might all remain in so sound a sleep, that twelve timid men might elude them—roll away from the door of the sepulchre a massy stone, and take away a dead body; or, on the other hand, what our Saviour repeatedly predicted,—what the soldiers themselves honestly confessed before they were bribed,—what the disciples were willing to attest to, at the risk of their lives, when they could not have been deceived, and what the Apostles, whenever they were permitted to preach, always placed in the front of their addresses as that which they found it most easy, irresistably to substantiate. As another conclusive argument of

a Verses 12—28

the truth of this fact, we may adduce the establishment of the Christian Sabbath. No person can tell how the observation of the first day of the week could ever have commenced, unless it had commenced at the time, when the fact existed which it is designed to commemorate. The same remark is true in reference to the Lord's supper.

We have now given a brief summary of the evidence in proof of the resurrection of our Saviour. According to the repeated declarations of the Apostle, it is equally decisive in proving the resurrection of all mankind. We have also in proof of this point, many plain and unequivocal declarations of Scripture. "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." *a*

Q. Will mankind be raised with the same bodies, with which they leave the world?

A. If by identity in this question, be meant the same particles of matter, the Scriptures as well as common sense decide it in the negative. "But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." *b* From the last sentence in this passage, *to every seed his own body*, we are led to believe that although we are not to expect that the same particles of matter will be raised, yet there will be in some respects a sameness. From other passages of Scripture, it is evident

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a John v. 28, 29.—See also 1 Cor. xv. 51–5, and Rev. xx. 13. *b* 1 Cor. xv. 35–38.

that this identity will be sufficient to enable us to recognize our former acquaintance, and this is all that is necessary in order that the character of men may be exhibited in the judgment day, and the government of God vindicated. With regard to any other identity, when we reflect on the changes that matter may undergo in this world, the power of God, and the fact that our bodies, when raised, are to be *spiritual*, we must consider all inquiries on the subject as irrelevant, and unmeaning. On the whole, the doctrine of the resurrection, like many others, must be a source of unfailing comfort and support to the people of God, and of fearful apprehensions to the impenitent and ungodly.

Q. What evidence have we that there will be a day of judgment?

A. Evidence in proof of this may be derived, both from the light of nature, and from the Scriptures. It appears at first view, without reasoning upon the subject, necessary in order to mark out entire, a moral system. If we are moral beings, it is natural to expect that we shall be furnished with a rule of life, or a law, to which it is our duty to conform, and by which our conduct should be governed. If we are furnished with such a law, it seems equally natural to expect that we shall be called to an account, that our obedience or disobedience may be known and justly rewarded. But for a more conclusive argument we remark,

1. It is not easy to see how the character of God may be vindicated, unless there is a day in which men are to be judged according to their deeds. That there is a difference in the characters of men, no one will doubt. That they are not rewarded in the present life according to their characters, is equally plain. Some of the vilest characters such as are guilty of the greatest injustice in this world, as far as we can see, are visited with but few afflictions or troubles, in compar-

ison with others, whose characters are fair and upright, and whose lives are devoted to usefulness. The answer which our Saviour gave to those, who informed him of the fate of some whose blood Pilate had mingled in the sacrifices, is directly to this point. "Think ye that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them were sinners above all? I tell you nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." *a* Now if men are not justly rewarded in the present life, nor in that which is to come, how can we determine from the government of Jehovah, that he is better pleased with virtue than with vice? But it is unnecessary to bring forward arguments from the light of nature, were they ever so numerous, since the point is so plainly and undoubtedly established by the Scriptures. *b*

The judgment day, is one of those subjects on which a writer can do but little if any thing more, than barely to show it to be a fact. So various and so unknown to each other are the characters of men in this world, and so much is depending on the decisions of that day, that the imagination of every serious and reflecting man, when he turns his mind upon it, must outrun the pen of the readiest writer, and furnish him with contemplations to which language can do but imperfect justice.

Burge on the Atonement.—Dwight's Theology.—Butler's Analogy.—Scott's Bible.

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a Luke xiii. 4, 5. *b* Mat. xxv. 31—33, and xii. 36. 2 Cor. v. 10. Heb. ix. 27. Rev. xx. 12. Jude 6.

SECTION XV.

Future Punishment.

Q. What evidence have we, that impenitent sinners will be punished in the future world?

A. Were it not that men may be found, who will disbelieve any doctrine that is opposed to their wishes, however it may be supported with evidence, no arguments would be necessary to show, that if the Bible may be relied on, the wicked will be punished in the future world. If it were the sole intention of a man, to see how plain and prominent a doctrine of the Scriptures, he might discredit in the minds of many, there is no one on which he would be more likely to try his skill, than the doctrine in question.

The question now before us, is not whether sinners will be punished *without end;* but, whether they will be punished *at all.*

1. The first argument we shall adduce, in proof that they will be punished, is the fact that they cannot be happy in the enjoyment of God, without a change of heart; and the certainty that all men do not experience this change in the present life. That sinners must be born again before they can be reconciled to God, is what we have already repeatedly established. (See pages 111, 119, 144.) It is sufficient here to remark, that the happiness of heaven it is acknowledged by all, consists in an inward and perfect delight in spiritual and holy objects; and that for such objects, sinners by nature have not the least relish. There is no possibility of avoiding the conclusion, that they are miserable in the future world, only by saying that this change is experienced at death. This opinion we have already shown, cannot be reconciled with the Scriptures. (See page 134.) It only re-

mains to be shown, that all men are not born again in the present world. If any thing can be determined concerning the effects of regeneration, from the conduct of men, it is equally as certain that many die unregenerate. What arguments do we need to convince us, that he who dies an open and bitter infidel; or an habitual blasphemer; or a wilful and deliberate murderer, does not act under the influence of a new heart? If we have any evidence that the carnal heart is "enmity against God," we have the same that with all this enmity many are overtaken by death. We are brought unavoidably to this result, that such as die in impenitence, are miserable in the future world.

2. If the wicked suffer no punishment beyond the grave, it will be impossible to exculpate the writers of the Bible, from the charge of designing to mislead its readers. If all the wicked upon their leaving this world, are to be received immediately to heaven as certainly as the righteous; it would seem if the Bible is designed to be our guide, we should find it as evidently revealed. Have mankind been uniformly as liable to believe from the Scriptures, that the incorrigible sinner is as fair a candidate for heaven, as the saint? This question need only be suggested, to furnish its own answer. Neither can it be pretended that this difference is occasioned by the nature of the subject. To be sure it is sometimes said, that the doctrine of future punishment is *popular*. But, is it popular, to inform men that unless they forsake their sin, however pleasing it may be to their hearts, it will conduct them inevitably to a world of wretchedness and despair? If it be, it would be a curious question for the moral philosopher to tell why, unless it is because it is so plainly taught in the Bible, that to deny it is to wage open war with every dictate of reason and judgment.

The truth is, that men would never believe in a sentiment

as unpleasant to the natural heart as this, unless the Scriptures were so plain and unequivocal in support of it, that they could not be honestly believed, while that was rejected. How often, as the Bible is generally understood, is this subject suggested! Such declarations as the following cannot be understood upon honest principles, if this doctrine be not true: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." *a* "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." *b* "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat." *c* If the men by whom these passages were penned, had no belief in a future punishment, they must have known that they should mislead the honest reader. The word *hell*, and other words that as clearly imply a state of punishment beyond the grave, are used in the New Testament only, more than fifty times. If no punishment be meant by these expressions, of what possible use can be such a Bible? To suppose that the meaning or opinion of the writers, is so different from what their language would naturally intimate, is a more bold and impious attack on the character of God, than an open rejection of the whole of Revelation. It would clearly and undeniably show that he had given the Scriptures for the purpose of misleading or of deceiving mankind.

3. If sinners are not punished in the future world, in many of the dealings of divine providence, God has shown himself to be a friend to sin and an enemy to holiness. To prove this, we need only advert to the destruction of the old world, of Sodom and Gomorrah. That the inhabitants who perished with the flood, were extremely wicked, there can be no doubt. Noah is said to be a just person, and a preacher of righteousness. *d* Now if there be no punishment in the fu-

a Ps. ix. 17. *b* Mat. xxv. 56. *c* Mat. vii. 13. *d* 2 Pet. ii. 5—8.

ture world, to which of these characters has the Almighty manifested the greatest kindness? On this supposition how could he manifest greater kindness to those guilty wretches, than he has done in their destruction from the earth? He has taken them by a sudden exit, from all their trials and all their sins, and has virtually said to them, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." On the other hand, Noah, as a reward for his faithfulness, and his opposition to their ungodliness, was preserved from the flood that he might experience a while longer the toils of life; while his ungodly neighbours with whom his "righteous soul had been vexed from day to day," were *already* entered into the joy of their Lord! The same remarks it is plain, are applicable in reference to the destruction of Sodom, and the cities of the plain.

4. It is clearly represented in the Bible, that there will be a separation between the righteous and the wicked, after the resurrection. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." *a* "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." *b* "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For *without* are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." *c* The city which is here mentioned, is uniformly admitted to be heaven, the future resi-

a Mat. xxv. 31, 32. *b* John v. 28, 29. *c* Rev. xxii 14, 15.

dence of the just; but that some will be excluded from it, nothing can be more certain. On the whole, whoever examines the Scriptures with an honest and attentive mind, will find it to contain more unequivocal declarations in support of this doctrine, than that the righteous will be received to happiness; and of course so far as they are believed, this doctrine will be received as truth.

Q. Will the punishment of the wicked be endless?

A. As the Bible is our only guide, on every question that relates to the future world, and as this is a question in which we have an important interest, it ought to be our object to determine simply, what the Bible says on the subject. While men are influenced by their *feelings*, more than by reason or Revelation; they decide at once, that this doctrine is inconsistent with the character of God. Many go so far as to affirm with confidence, that it would be unjust for God to suffer his creatures to have an existence, if he *knew* that they would render themselves eternally miserable. To answer the question before us, it will be our first object to prove, that endless punishment is just.

1. Endless punishment is threatened by the divine law. By turning to what has been said on the *penalty of the law*, the reader will see that this point has been already established. It was shown that the penalty of the law was eternal death, and that only. As we have not room to repeat the arguments upon this point, and as it is a point which has an important bearing on the subject of future punishment, we must sincerely request the reader to examine what has been said upon it, before he comes to a decision on the question before us. As an additional argument, we would remark, that if *such a penalty be not just*, then it would not be just for God to permit the sinner to continue in his present course. It is admitted by all, that if men continue in their sins, they

will continue to be miserable. It must be acknowledged that God is not under obligation *on the ground of justice*, to furnish them with those favours, from which they derive the little happiness they now enjoy; and without which, they would be far more miserable than they now are. If he be, they are not sinners, and the law has no demand against them. It must also be acknowledged that God is not under obligation to convert them. If he be, their salvation cannot be of grace. If their conversion be what they have a right to demand on the footing of justice, no one who understands the meaning of the word, will contend that it is of grace. It will then unavoidably follow, that God may justly leave impenitent sinners to their own course, and may justly deprive them of the mercies of life; and what would then be wanting to make them eternally miserable?

Q. *Can* a finite being, in a finite period of time, incur sufficient criminality, to deserve an infinite punishment?

A. To decide that it *cannot* be done, is to decide as we have already seen, in direct opposition to the decision of the Almighty. Besides, we greatly deceive ourselves if we imagine that the guilt of sin, is to be measured by the capacity of the sinner, and the time in which it is committed. By what governments were punishments ever inflicted, according to the ability of the offender? *To be capable of obeying* a law, is all the ability that is taken into the account, in estimating the degrees of guilt. Where this is possessed, the only thing by which guilt is ever measured, is the importance of the law that is violated. Some crimes are punished with death—some with a temporary imprisonment, and some with a trifling fine. This difference is in no case occasioned by the difference in the capacity of the offenders; but invariably by the law that is broken. The law of God is in every respect infinite. The least violation of it, if it were continued,

would produce an infinite evil. The least violation of it, involves the principle of disobedience, and this need only be extended, to ruin the Universe. Upon this principle, it is easy to understand the declaration of the Apostle James: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all." *a* If we judge then by the *importance* of the law, as in every other case, sin must be considered infinite.

2. There is another principle in which all are agreed, which if applied to the subject before us, will bring us to a similar decision. The principle to which I refer is this:—*The criminality of a man's misconduct, is not to be estimated by what he accomplishes, but by his intentions.* If a man intend to take the life of his neighbour, and in making the attempt is defeated; he is considered by every sober man, a murderer. Perfectly according with this, is the declaration of the Saviour: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her, already in his heart." *b* Now what is the nature of the sinner's intentions, when he disregards the authority of God? He proclaims as far as his influence extends, that the commands of God ought not to be obeyed. If a spirit like his were to prevail, it would ruin the kingdom of God. The same scenes of discord and confusion which we witness in our world, would be witnessed in heaven, and through the whole empire of Jehovah. The sinner is not to be praised, that he is unable to give his opinions and his spirit, this extensive spread. He *would* do it if it were in his power. When he murmurs at divine providence, because *his* plans are interrupted, were he able he would unhinge the order of the whole Universe. Men, as limited in knowledge as they may be, are capable of having desires, which were they gratified, would wrest the

a James ii 10. *b* Mat. v. 28.

sceptre of universal government from the hands of the Almighty, and consign the Universe to everlasting anarchy and confusion. Now if a finite being be capable of despising the authority, the wisdom, and the benevolence of God, and if his criminality be according to the desires of his heart, without any regard to his power, as in every other case; what is there wanting to make his sin infinite?

3. That men are capable of committing sins, which in the opinion of their Judge deserve an infinite punishment, is evident from the *threatenings* of the Bible. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." *a* "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord." *b* "Where their worm *dieth not*, and the fire *is not* quenched." *c* "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." *d* "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness; but is in danger of eternal damnation." *e* These passages are cited merely to show the *character* of the threatenings of God against sin. It will certainly be granted that he knows better than his creatures, what punishment sin, as committed against his law, justly deserves. How far these representations are to be understood in a figurative, and how far in a literal sense, is a question that is wholly foreign to the subject. If metaphors are used by the Spirit of inspiration, they are used to exhibit truth; but if they represent truth to be more fearful and appalling than it is, what can it be called but deception?

Q. What evidence have we that the words *everlasting*, *forever and ever*, and *eternal*, are used in the Scriptures to mean endless?

A. As we have not room for many remarks upon this

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a Matt. xxv. 46. *b* 2 Thess. i. 9. *c* Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. *d* Rev. xiv. 11. *e* Mark iii. 29.

point here, we shall content ourselves by giving the reader the result of one of the most careful and able examinations, which the subject has ever undergone. President Edwards the younger, has been at the pains to examine the words, from which these are translated, throughout the Bible, and has come to the following result:—The word *aiön*, from which everlasting, and eternal, are generally rendered, when governed by the preposition *eis*, is used in the New Testament sixty-one times. In six of these instances it refers to future punishment, and in the other fifty-five, it must from the nature of the subjects about which it is employed, mean a duration that is endless The reader is left to judge how clearly impossible it is, that the word should be used to imply *invariably*, a duration that is endless, when employed about any other subject; and still that it should mean a limited duration when applied to this. A careful examination of this subject, it is believed will convince every honest mind, that when the words *everlasting*, *forever*, &c. are used in a limited sense, they are used metaphorically; and that their meaning when it is to be understood literally, must be endless. It is often said in common conversation, that a slow man is forever doing but little—Such a man is forever talking—Such a man's fame is immortal, &c. It is not intended in cases like these, that these words should be understood literally. The same may be said of their use, in many passages of Scripture. The mountains, the priesthood of Aaron, and many other things, are said to be everlasting. What can be more evident than that these words are not used in this figurative manner when applied to future punishment? As the word is used to signify the duration of happiness with the righteous, as well as the duration of misery with the wicked, it would be impossible to tell, why we might not as well understand it to be used metaphorically in one case, as in the other. If these

words be so understood in both cases, we have no proof that the happiness of the saints, will be eternal.

The same words are used in many passages, to express the duration of the existence of God. Besides, the threatenings of God are exhibited in other words, the meaning of which cannot be mistaken. "But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, *it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" *a* "Where their worm *dieth not*, and the *fire is not* quenched." *b* They "Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." *c* These passages, together with the reasons which have been offered, must be sufficient to show that eternal punishment is threatened; and if it be threatened, it must be just.

Another evidence that endless punishment is not unjust, may be inferred from the salvation of the righteous. No one it is believed would contend, that the demerit of sin is not to be taken into the account, in estimating the grace that is displayed in salvation. It is uniformly believed, and universally represented in the Bible, that the salvation of the righteous, will be eternal. But if it be eternal, and be wholly of grace; then so far as the demerit of sin can be inferred from the grace that is promised, so far it is evident that justice requires a punishment that is endless. A man may be eternally saved, it is true, from the punishment of a day; but it would be manifestly improper to call such a salvation eternal. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." *d* In this passage the gift of God is to be estimated in his saving the sinner from a death, that is placed in opposition to a life, that is eternal. To conclude our remarks on this argument, we cannot conceive how we can be "Saved from *wrath to come* through Jesus," *e* if eternal death be not

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a Mat. xii. 32. *b* Mark ix 46. *c* Prov. xxix. 1. *d* Rom. vi. 23. *e* 1 Thess. i 10.

the demand of divine justice. If it be a punishment that is limited, however long it may be, when that period has passed away, the righteous can no longer be said to be saved from wrath to come.

We have now proved, it would seem to the satisfaction of all who mean to take the Bible for their guide, that endless punishment will not be unjust; and in doing it, the reader will perceive that we have cited many passages of Scripture which prove also *that it will be inflicted* on some of our race.

As another evidence that the impenitent will be punished in the future world without end, they are represented in the Bible as being *without hope*. "The hope of unjust men perisheth." *a* "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." *b* "Their hope shall be like the giving up of the Ghost." *c* If the wicked have the promise of being released after suffering in the prison of hell for any finite period of time, it cannot be said that they are without hope.

Another argument in proof of this point, is derived from the use of such terms as *lost, perished, destroyed*, &c. as they are used in the Bible. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." *d* "None of them is lost but the son of perdition." *e* "The preaching of the cross, is to them that *perish*, foolishness." *f* "For we are unto God a sweet savour in Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish." *g* "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." *h* "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." *i* "But the way of the ungodly shall perish." *k* "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the

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a Prov xi. 7. *b* Job viii. 13 *c* Job xi 20, and Prov. xiii. 32. *d* 2 Cor. iv. 3. *e* John xvii. 12 *f* 1 Cor i. 18. *g* 2 Cor. ii 15, 16. *h* 2 Thess. ii. 10. *i* Prov. xxix. 1. *k* Ps. i. 6.

workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever." *a* We cannot conceive how expressions as definite as these, can be so explained as to admit of any hope of future restoration, without doing violence to the Bible. There is but one method that we have ever seen, by which those who admit the immortality of the soul, attempt to evade the force of the argument drawn from these passages. It is said by some that to *perish*, or be *destroyed*, means only to *have the body of sins destroyed*. The reader is now requested to take this explanation & insert it in the place of the words *lost*, *perished*, *destroyed*, &c. as they are used in the passages we have cited. This method of testing an explanation, it is perfectly obvious, is fair and unobjectionable. The preaching of the cross is to them [*that have the body of their sins destroyed*] foolishness. For we are unto God a sweet savour in Christ, in them that are saved and them *that have their body of sin destroyed*. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly [have his sins destroyed] *and that without remedy*." "God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should [have their body of sin destroyed,] but that all should come to repentance." *b* "But these as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of things that they understand not, and shall *utterly* [have the body of their sins destroyed] *in their own corruption*." *c* "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise [have your sins destroyed."] *d*

Again, the punishment of the wicked in point of *duration*, is often placed in the Bible against the happiness of the righteous. The same word is used to express the duration in both cases, in many passages of Scripture. To the meaning of the

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a Ps xcii. 7 *b* 2 Pet iii. 9 *c* 2 Pet. ii 12. *d* Luke xiii. 3.—See also Ps. xxxvii. 20, and lxxiii, 27. Prov. x 28. Ps cxlv. 20. Prov. i. 32, and xi 3, and xiii. 13, 20.

word we have already attended; but the argument we wish to exhibit here, we would rest on a different consideration. It is universally acknowledged, that the happiness of the righteous will be eternal. Now if the same word be used to express the duration in one case as in the other, and if they are often placed one against the other in the form of antithesis; how can an honest reader avoid being deceived, if the extent of duration intended, be as different as finite from infinite? That the subject is often exhibited in this manner in the Scriptures, the reader will see, by consulting the references. *a*

Again, the wicked are represented as having *their portion* in this life. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham is represented as addressing the rich man in the following language: "Son, remember that thou in thy life time, receivedst thy good things." *b* "Deliver my soul (said the Psalmist in solemn prayer to God) from the wicked which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand: O Lord, from men of the world, who have their portion in this life." *c* How can it be said with truth, that they receive *their portion* in this life, if the time shall ever arrive when they shall be admitted to heaven?

Again, the door of heaven will be forever shut against the wicked. At a certain time our Saviour was accosted with the following question: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Although this question is not directly whether *all mankind* will be saved, still a plain and honest answer to *this*, will as conclusively decide *that*. If the Saviour had answered and said explicitly that *but few are saved*, the notion that all men will be saved, would have been, in the opinion of the candid, forever put down. But is not the answer *which he has given*, more full and decisive to this very point, in the mind of

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a Mat. xxv. 46 Rom. vi 23. 1 Cor. i. 18. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. Rom. ii. 7—9. *b* Luke xvi. 25 *c* Ps. xvii. 13. 14.

every conscientious reader, than it would have been on that supposition? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and *shall not be able*." If it be said that the Saviour means any thing by the phrase *strait gate*, but the gate of heaven, then he did not design to answer the question. We have then as much evidence that *some men will not enter the gate of heaven*, as that the Saviour designed to answer the question, and not deceive him who put it. Wherein does this answer fall short of being substantially a decision of the question, whether all men will be saved? That the Saviour meant it should be so understood, is plain from what immediately follows. "When once the master of the house is risen up and *hath shut to the door*, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying Lord, Lord, open unto us: And he shall answer and say unto you I know you not whence ye are:" "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob *in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out*." *a*

If the reader has still a doubt on this subject, let him answer to himself the following question:—If the question were put to a firm believer in the salvation of all men, whether he believed that but *few* would be saved, would his answer, if he were honest, correspond with that of the Saviour? He does not tell us that but *few* will be saved in comparison with the *whole;* but he tells us as definitely as words will admit, that *some will* NOT *be saved.*

Still more decisive if possible, are some declarations which are found in the last chapter of Revelations. After a clear description of the New Jerusalem, or the New Heavens and New Earth, we are told that "*Without* are dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, and idolaters, and whatsoever

a Luke xiii. 25—28.

loveth and maketh a lie." Then the time will have come, when the voice of the Redeemer shall declare, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still." *a*

Again, some are said to be already suffering a punishment that is eternal. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*" *b* We have cited this passage, not only because it is obviously decisive on the subject, but with a view to notice some explanations, by which many attempt to evade its force. It is said that the *fire may be eternal*, though all men be restored from it, and admitted to the kingdom of heaven. But, would it be possible to suffer the *vengeance of eternal fire* in an hour; or in any period that is not eternal? Does not its duration constitute an important part of its vengeance? It is said by others that this fire, is the fire of *God's love.* If, to suffer vengeance, and to suffer it "*as an example to those who afterward should live* ungodly," *c* mean nothing more than to experience the love of God; every attempt to settle any question from the Bible, must be given up forever. Are sinners to be told that if they will not refrain from their sins, they shall experience eternally the love of God? If this interpretation be admitted, it is plain that words may mean every thing, any thing, or nothing.

The last argument which will be offered in proof of this doctrine, is drawn from its effects, both on its preachers, and their hearers. If these effects are invariably similar to those that followed the preaching of the Apostles, it will amount to an unanswerable argument in favour of its truth. It is much

a Rev. xxii. 11, 15. *b* Jude 7. *c* 2 Pet. ii. 6.

easier by artful and insinuating evasions to do away, with such as are ignorant and yet candid, the force of those arguments drawn from the direct passages we have cited, than those which are drawn from the effects we have named. A conscientious belief that such as remain impenitent, will experience an endless punishment, must produce effects which are in some respects peculiar. If the Apostles were believers in this doctrine, it is natural to expect a corresponding line of conduct. It is but rational to suppose that it would lead them to a vigilance and a perseverance which could not be expected from others. Such was the fact. Hear the appeal of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders: "Therefore watch, and remember, that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn *every one, night and day and with tears.*" *a* Would not this be strange language, and strange conduct in one who did not believe the doctrine in question? It certainly cannot be denied, but that we find many at the present day who exhibit a zeal and perseverance, which bear a strong resemblance to this; but they are not among those who reject this doctrine. These are not the men, who are willing like the Apostles to sacrifice every earthly comfort, and to count not even life itself dear, that they may testify the gospel of the grace of God. *b*

The argument is still more convincing if we look at the effects of this doctrine on the *hearers* of the Apostles. They were often filled with fear, and were led to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved!" *c* Was there ever an instance..... is it possible there ever *can* be an instance, where that preaching in which the doctrine of endless punishment was denied, was the means of producing effects like these? This argument may be viewed in another point of light. The Apostles themselves considered these effects, especially when they

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a Acts xx. 31. *b* Acts xx 24. *c* Acts ii. 37, and xvi. 30.

resulted in conversion, as undeniable evidence that the Holy Spirit accompanied them, and gave success to their labours. *a* Considered in this light, these effects are the testimony of the Holy Ghost, to the truth and importance of this doctrine. It is to be expected that the process of conversion, like every thing else, will be counterfeited; still it is true in multitudes of instances, that God has set his seal to the truth of this doctrine, by making it the instrument of powerful and lasting effects on the hearts of men.

We have now given a brief exhibition of the principal arguments, by which the doctrine of future punishment is supported; and if this doctrine be not supported, it is not vain or dogmatic to say, that no doctrine can be proved from the Bible.

Q. Are there not some passages of Scripture, which speak of a future restoration of the wicked, from the prison of hell?

A. There are passages which it is thought by many contain promises of this character. To some of these passages the attention of the reader has already been called. (See question whether the present is our only state of probation.) Another passage which is often cited in proof of this point, may be found in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Speaking of ancient Israel it is said, "When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters; then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them." *b* This passage, so far from being a promise, is one of the most fearful threatenings in the whole Bible. The destiny of Sodom is recorded in other places. It was uniformly considered as given over to remediless destruction. *c* To be convinced that this was designed as a threatening, we need only look at the context. "As I live saith the Lord, Sodom thy sister hath not done,

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a Acts xv. 4, 7, 8, 12. *b* Ezek. xvi. 53, 55, &c. *c* Jude 7, and 2 Pet. ii. 6.

she nor her daughters, as thou hast done." "Neither hath Samaria committed half thine abominations" Here is a comparison between the sin of Jerusalem and that of Sodom and Samaria; and the result is, the sins of Jerusalem were far the most aggravating. This, it must appear, is a singular reason for giving them a promise of eternal restoration to his favour. "Thou also which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins which thou hast committed more abominable than they; yea be confounded in that thou hast justified thy sisters." Then he introduces the passage in question; "When I shall bring again," &c. "When thy sister Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate; then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate." This declaration amounts very obviously to the following: "You have uniformly considered Sodom as consigned to hopeless ruin; but your sins are far greater than hers, and I will visit you with calamities from which you will not recover, till Sodom is restored to her former estate." When Sodom, whose ruin is proverbially hopeless, shall be restored to her former state, then, and not till then, may you expect to be restored. Another evidence that these declarations were designed as threatenings, will be seen in the sixtieth verse of the same chapter. "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth,—then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed when thou shalt receive thy sisters thine elder and thy younger." This unquestionably contains a promise, and from the particle *nevertheless*, it must be plain that what had gone before, was a threatening. This particle cannot be used, only where the sense is designed to be changed. The promise contained in the verse last quoted, evidently exhibits the following sentiment: "Nevertheless, *though I visit you in your present*

generations with these fearful and fatal judgments, I will not forget the covenant that I made with your fathers, to bring in the Jews, in the latter day, *with the fulness of the Gentiles.*" The conversion of the Gentiles is what we are to understand by their being received as the sisters of the Jews. When they are admitted to the same church, and are considered as belonging to the same family, this promise will be fulfilled. It is now left for the reader to judge whether any support can be derived to the doctrine of final restoration from this passage. Indeed if the whole for which the advocates of this opinion contend were granted—if Jerusalem and Sodom should be recovered to their former estate, what would that amount to, toward a universal restoration? It would not only fail of amounting to any thing like a restoration, but it is in itself impossible. This will be shown in our remarks on another passage, that is often brought to prove the same doctrine.

"Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began." *a* The word *restitution* means to be restored, or brought back to a former condition. It is certain, of course, that the word can never be understood literally, in its application to mankind. The whole of our race can never be reduced to one man, and he be subjected to a state of trial, similar to that of Adam. Besides, the passage refers to promises which were spoken by the mouth of *all* the holy prophets since the world began. If the prophets have told of a final restoration to everlasting life, the passages can be produced. The prophets have foretold, that every thing shall be brought into subjection to the government of God; and in this way the harmony and regularity of the primeval state, will be restored. This is

a Acts iii. 21.

undoubtedly what is meant by the restitution, in the passage above cited. Such a restitution will be brought about, when all the enemies of God will be no longer allowed to disturb his kingdom, but will be confined to the prison of hell. Then, God will have put "all his enemies under his feet," and there shall be nothing that shall be allowed to disturb or annoy, in all his holy mountain. On the other hand, if the passage be understood in a literal sense, and we admit that things may be brought back to their primitive state, what will then be gained toward proving a future restoration? Men have once apostatized from primitive innocence, and if they were restored to it again, what security could we have that they would be preserved from apostacy hereafter? The reader is now left to judge for himself, whether these passages afford any evidence of a final restoration; or whether the sentiment be not a delusion, unsupported by the word of God, resorted to for the purpose of soothing the conscience, while the heart is determined to indulge in sin.

Q. Are there not some passages of Scripture, which seem to support the doctrine that all men will be saved?

A. Some passages, if we look at them without any reference to their connexion, *seem*, it is true, to support this doctrine. And it is equally true that there is no doctrine so absurd, that it cannot be supported in the same way. The Bible is to be read and understood as that which is consistent with itself, and of course, in determining the meaning of almost any passage, recourse must be had to its connexion. Many of those passages which are thought to support this doctrine, are promises made to the saints; and the writers of the Bible in addressing them, have made use of such terms as *us*, *every*, *all*, &c. "God hath not appointed *us* to wrath," *a* "Every man's work shall be made manifest, &c.—If any

a 1 Thess. v. 9.

man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." *a* In the first of these verses, by the term *us*, the Apostle undoubtedly referred to believers, as every person must be convinced, who will examine the connexion. By the expression *every man* in the second, he means to be understood preachers of the gospel. The whole course of his reasoning in this passage, shows beyond all question that this is his meaning. "God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." *b* This passage is often cited, to show that all men will be saved; but the reader must see that the Apostle meant the same by the word *all*, as by *us*, in the foregoing sentence, and by this he must be convinced that the Apostle referred to his brethren. It would seem as though the Apostle cautiously designed to avoid being understood to mean any other than his Christian brethren; "But is long-suffering to *us-ward*." As we have not room to examine every passage that might be thought favourable to the doctrine of universal salvation, we have quoted the foregoing, merely as a specimen, to show how phrases are often perverted by the manner and the purpose for which they are quoted. For impenitent sinners to appropriate these passages to their own case, as promises made to them, and hang their everlasting salvation upon them, is absurd and dangerous. A man might as well break the seal from a letter which he knew was directed to another, and take possession of the contents, because he supposed them to be valuable; as to depend on promises, however free and merciful they might be, which were made to a character entirely different from that which he sustains. That the word *all* is frequently used in a limited sense, may be seen by consulting the references. *c*

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a 1 Cor iii, 13—15 *b* 2 Pet. iii. 9. *c* Mat iii. 6. Mark i, 5. Col. i, 6.

Another passage, which is thought by many to support this doctrine, is the following: "For as in Adam all die; so in Christ shall all be made alive." *a* It is so perfectly plain that the Apostle refers in this passage to the resurrection, and that only, it is matter of surprize that it should ever be quoted upon any other subject. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept: For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." These verses, immediately precede the one in question, and the one that follows, is if possible, still more definite. "But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming." Now is it not manifestly absurd to suppose that there is an *order* in salvation, and that Christ is in any sense the first that is saved? "Afterwards *they that are Christ's* at his coming." This passage very plainly intimates that there will be some who will not belong to Christ; and in what order such will be saved, it must be impossible to tell.

Another passage, which is thought by many to prove this doctrine, reads thus: "Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." *b* From this passage it is obvious, that God does as certainly will, that all men should be brought to the knowledge of the truth, as that all men should be saved. This however is not accomplished. Besides, there is a sense in which it is true that God does will the salvation of all men, and yet his willing it in that sense, will not secure the salvation of one. To show the truth of this remark, we will cite some other passages, which evidently contain a similar sentiment. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that *dieth*, saith the Lord." *c* From this declaration it must be seen, that some sinners actually die, and yet their death in one sense, is not pleasing to God. If

a 1 Cor xv. 22 *b* 1 Tim ii, 4 *c* Ezek xviii, 32

it be against his pleasure, it is in the same sense against his will. The same sentiment is exhibited in the following passage: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." *a*

Here is an event, the existence of which, our Saviour as really willed, as he willed the salvation of all men; and yet by the depravity of men, its existence was prevented "How often would I have gathered thy children, &c. and ye would not." If it should be said that he will gather them hereafter; the argument is not affected by this evasion in the least. The declaration of the Saviour is in the past tense, How often *would I have gathered* thee. It is impossible to evade the conclusion that there is a sense in which the will of the Saviour was prevented. There is a distinction upon this subject which we must understand and adopt, before we can understand the Bible, or show how the providence of God, may be consistent with his character. To this distinction we have already alluded. (See page 71.) The distinction to which we refer is one that we often have occasion to adopt in the common concerns of life. *An event may be pleasing when viewed in itself, and displeasing when viewed in connexion with other things; and on the other hand, an event may be displeasing when viewed in itself, and pleasing when viewed in connexion with other things.* As a thing considered in itself, we are unwilling to take an emetic, or to correct a child; but when we look at the importance of enjoying health, in the first case, or at the future welfare of our families in the second, we are willing to do either. The sufferings of Christ in themselves considered, every person will acknowledge, were displeasing to God; but when viewed in connex-

a Math xxiii, 37

;on with the great scheme of salvation, and the eternal display of his perfections, he was willing to have him suffer. It is a thing that is pleasing in itself, and it is the will of God, that all men should *now* repent. He commands it, *a* and he would not command that to be done, which was in no sense agreeable to his will. In the same sense he wishes every man now to be perfect; this also he has commanded. *b* It is his will that all men should love him supremely; but this it is certain is not done. In the same sense, it is his will that all men should be saved. It may be *on the whole* more for the glory of God to let some men exhibit the extent of their depravity, than it would be to bring them all, immediately to repentance. No injustice, it is evident, is done to them; and to doubt that it is *on the whole* best, is to impeach his character. On the same principle, it may be for his glory, that some should experience the just reward of their conduct, in the future world; although as a thing in itself it may be opposed to his will. For another argument, that the distinction which has been named must be adopted, the reader may look at one passage, which has been already cited from the Apostle Peter. "But is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish." This passage would prove nothing in the mind of any man, in favour of universal salvation, unless he believed that by the word *perish*, the Apostle meant to be understood *perishing eternally*. If we suppose that to be his meaning, (and there is no way to avoid it) what shall we say of another passage in the context? "But these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of things that they understand not, and *shall utterly perish in their own corruption.*" *c* Now it cannot with soberness be supposed, that the Apostle would change the meaning of his own words, and of course, some men will per-

a Acts xvii 30. *b* Mat. v. 48. *c* 2 Pet. ii. 12.

ish eternally. The expression in this case, is certainly more unequivocal than in the other, and *if the other be understood* as referring to sinners, contrary to every correct principle of language, it does not amount to the shadow of an argument to prove that all men will be saved; but on the other hand, it gives us from this, an argument against it, which never can be removed.

There is another passage, which is thought to be conclusive in proof of this doctrine, contained in the book of Revelations. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." *a* The plain meaning of this passage is, that the Apostle was enabled, by the spirit of inspiration, to look forward and see a period, when the worship and the service of God would prevail *in heaven*, and *on the earth*, and *under the earth*, and *in the sea*; but he gives us no intimation that it would prevail *in hell*. No candid believer in the doctrine of future punishment, pretends to affix *any* locality to the world of misery, much less to affix it in any of those places mentioned by the Apostle. Since the Apostle was so particular, in mentioning those places where the worship of God would prevail, and be universal, and has said nothing concerning the world of despair; it is a powerful argument that he intended to be understood by passing over it, that it was an exception.

The doctrine of universal salvation, is thought by many, to be plainly contained in the following passage: "I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." *b* The same senti-

a Rev, v. 13. *b* Isa. xlv 23.

ment is contained in other passages. *a* It is doubtless true, that every individual will be brought into a voluntary, or involuntary subjection to the government of God. Such as remain the enemies of God *will be put under his feet.* *b* This expression is used in allusion to the subjugation of the five kings of Canaan by Joshua; and no one supposes that they become his friends.

That this is the subjugation mentioned in the passages cited above, may be seen by looking at the immediate connexion of that which is taken from Isaiah. "And all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed." *c* The wicked will be constrained so far to acknowledge the justice of God as to do honor to his character and government.

Q. Is it not painful to the heart of a parent to apply a momentary correction to his child, however obstinate he may be? How then can we believe that God, who is every where represented as a tender and benevolent parent, can inflict a punishment upon his subjects, which is eternal?

A. On the subject of punishment, it is irrational as well as dangerous, to compare ourselves with God. "Ye thought that I was altogether such an one as yourselves; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee. Therefore consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." *d* No earthly parents, it can be expected, will possess as adequate views of the importance of the law, and of the importance to the system of divine government that it should be supported, as God. What earthly parents, if it were in their power, would send a deluge upon their rebellious children, and overwhelm them in a watery grave? What parent would rain fire and brimstone upon them, and consume them; or cause the earth to open and

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a Rom. xiv. 11, and Phil. ii. 10. *b* 1 Cor. xv. 25. *c* Isa. xlv. 24. *d* Ps. l. 21, 22

receive them? How perfectly flimsy must be every argument, drawn from a comparison of our feelings in view of sin, with those of the great Jehovah! It is in his power, were he only disposed, to put an immediate end to all the sufferings that we witness in our world.

Q. If Christians, with the little love which they possess, would rejoice to have all men saved, may we not conclude that God, since it is said that *he is love*, and since no one can doubt his power, will convert and save all?

A. There is the same impropriety in this comparison, as in the former. Christians would put an end to all the miseries of the present world. They would spread the gospel over the whole earth, and convert every sinner to the faith, were it in their power. And has not God as much tenderness and love to mankind, as Christians? Christians know little or nothing about the important purposes that are to be accomplished, by allowing men to continue in their course, and to exhibit their real characters; neither are they fit judges what punishment the holiness of God's law, and the permanency of his government require. Although the question before us, as it makes an appeal to the *feelings* of men, is one of the most plausible arguments that are brought to prove the doctrine of universal salvation, it must appear to every serious man from the above remarks, to be idle and nugatory. If it should be said that the Deity suffers men to be miserable in the present life, that their happiness in the life to come may be the greater, we answer that this is admitting that he suffers evil for a greater good; and by what possible process of reasoning can we prove that he will not suffer it upon the same principle, eternally?

We will now present before the reader a brief statement of the arguments with which we have supported the doctrine of the endless punishment of the incorrigible sinner. It has

been shown that such a punishment is *just*—that it is threatened—that the salvation of the righteous cannot be of grace, if this doctrine be not just—that the duration of punishment with the wicked, is often placed against the duration of happiness, with the righteous—that the wicked will be *without hope*—that they are said to *perish*, to *utterly perish*, be *destroyed*, &c.—that the wicked *have their portion in this life*—that the door of heaven will be eternally shut against them—that some are already suffering a punishment that is eternal—and finally, that no other doctrine could have produced the *effects*, which were produced by the preaching of the Apostles.

Edwards against Chauncey.—Appleton's Lectures.—Birge on the Atonement.—Scott's Bible.

SECTION XVI.

INSTITUTIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

Christian Sabbath.

Q. What do we understand by the Sabbath?

A. The word originally meant a day of rest; and was given to that day, on which it is said God rested from the work of creation, and which the Jews were commanded to observe, in commemoration of that event. As the same word is now used to mean that day which Christians are required to keep as a day of rest, it is to be hoped that *Sunday*, (a name which was given to the day by the heathen, because it was the day on which they worshipped the sun) will soon pass into everlasting disuse.

Q. What was the object for which the Sabbath was appointed?

A. It was appointed, as has been already stated, to com-

memorate the work of creation; *a* but, in order that this answer may be satisfactory, it will be necessary to show what purposes were to be accomplished, by this commemoration. The objects to be accomplished by it were important, and show much of the wisdom and goodness of God.

1. One object for which the Sabbath was appointed, was that we might be favoured with a day of rest. It was not only designed to be a day of holy rest to the soul, but of rest and refreshment to the body. We are commanded to relinquish all manual labour, because on that day the Lord rested from the work of creation. Among other important objects, the Sabbath was designed to be an appointment of great mercy to the brutes. It is an observation that has been often made, and that too, by the most candid and intelligent men that have ever lived on the earth, that the world stands in need of precisely such an institution, aside from all religious considerations whatever. Labouring men and brutes, could they have no time to rest and renew their health and vigour, would soon sink under the burden of their toil and hardship, and be on the whole far less profitable to the world. Further, brutes have feelings as well as men, and so far as the command of God is obeyed, a kind respite is provided for them, of which we have every reason to believe, the covetcousness and cruelty of men, would otherwise have forever deprived them.

2. The Sabbath was appointed as a type of that future and spiritual rest, which is provided for the people of God.

As there are six days of labour and toil that precede the Sabbath of rest, so it is generally believed that there will be six thousand years of conflict and warfare with the Church of God, and then will commence the Sabbath of the world, or the millenium of the Church. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

a Ex. xx, 11

The Sabbath is also a type of the Christian's rest in heaven. "To morrow (said Moses) is the rest of the holy Sabbath of the Lord." The Apostle, it may well be supposed, had his eye upon this passage, as well as upon the original institution, while he penned the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. From a course of reasoning on the appointment of the Jewish and Christian Sabbaths, he comes to this conclusion: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."* "Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest."

3. But the most important object in the appointment of the Sabbath was, that the knowledge and worship of the true God might be perpetuated, and the introduction of idolatry prevented. He knew how soon a love for this world, and a constant attention to its concerns, would blind the minds of men after their fall, and lead them into idolatry. At the first thought, it would seem that men could never have been made to believe any other opinion, than that the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, were the work of an infinitely wise and powerful hand. But how soon after the creation, with all these evidences of wisdom and power before them, did mankind become so grovling, as to be worshipping idols of every description! Had they carefully observed the Sabbath, it would have effectually prevented their falling into this sin. Had they ceased every seventh day from their labours, and kept the day holy, in commemoration of the fact that the world had been created by the great Jehovah, they never could have believed in idols. So long then as this rite was understandingly observed, so long the worship of the true God would be preserved, throughout the inhabitants of the world. In this way the observance of the Sabbath was to be the principal means by which religion was to be supported on

* The word that is here translated rest, is in the original Sabbath

the earth. The advantages which result to mankind from pure religion, or the worship of the true God, are numerous and important. Its tendency is to elevate in every important respect, the human mind.

The mind, by being confined to this world, or to idolatry of any kind, becomes grovling and sensual. Immediately after the apostacy of our first parents, men became idolaters, and as the natural consequence of this, they became sensual and ignorant. The history of the world from that time to the present, affords the most decided evidence in proof of this point. Testimony the most unequivocal, may be obtained also from the present state of the world. If we look at those parts of the world, where still broods the gloomy night of Paganism, we shall see that just in proportion to the intensity of their spiritual, is their intellectual darkness. The more entirely the mind is under the control of this world, the more impervious to its sight are the walls of its prison; and of course, the less able it is to extend its discoveries. No other cause can be assigned why the minds of the heathen have not been turned to the sciences, and why they are not at this moment as enlightened as any nation on the face of the earth; *they have not the worship of the true God*, and are under the influence of habitual idolatry.

So far then, as we are anxious to promote the interests of general knowledge, and act understandingly, we shall be equally anxious to have the Sabbath universally observed. Every honest mind must be convinced, that it is the most important of all means, in preserving the worship of the true God in the world. When the mind, at the return of every seventh day, is called away from earthly and sensual objects, and led to a course of reflection that strengthens its faith in the existence of God, and renews the impressions produced by a view of his character, it must be obvious that the wor-

ship of God will be preserved, when otherwise, it would be soon buried in the sensuality and darkness of paganism.

2. The worship of God tends to promote all those virtues which render life a blessing. The reading of the Scriptures, the praises and the prayers of the house of God, all direct the attention of the mind, to subjects of a spiritual and holy character. There the miser, the man of pleasure, the profane swearer, the drunkard, &c. are constantly reminded that the eye of their Judge, who will ere long lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet, is fixed upon them. What will lead a man to treat the character and interest of his neighbour, both before his face and behind his back, with all that tenderness and affection which he would wish to have manifested toward his own, if he will not be led to it by what he sees and hears in the house of God? If he will not resolve to do it, when the bed of death, the bar of judgment, and the throne of God are often placed before him, will he ever be led to it by any motives however solemn and fearful? If he will not be excited to resolutions of this kind, where he is so often invited to contemplate such a character as the Saviour, what motives of a tender and benevolent character, can it ever be hoped will produce this effect?

It needs but little penetration to see that justice, honesty, tenderness, and whatever tends to inspire confidence, and nourish feelings of sincere regard among mankind, are directly inculcated, and constantly cherished by the worship of God.

Again, the worship of God is of incalculable importance in the support of government, especially if it be free and elective. No government will endure for any length of time without it, unless it is based on ignorance, and guarded by tyranny. Every page in the history of the world shows that man, if he have nothing but the feeble arm of human power to awe him to submission and obedience, wants nothing but

the opportunity, to enlist in every enterprize, by which he might hope to promote his own interest or honour, however hazardous it may be to the best interests of his government. The question which is suggested by the Illustrious WASHINGTON on this subject, in his Farewell Address, can never be answered. "Let it simply be asked, where is our security, either for property or for life, if all religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation, in our Courts of Justice?" The more light and information men possess, the more impossible it will be to have any form of government remain stable among them, if they have no fear of the retributions of God, in another world. What an awful and heart-sickening proof in support of this proposition, may be derived from the history of modern France! On the other hand, let a deep impression be implanted on the minds of men, that they are immortal, and that they are amenable to the eternal and unalterable retributions of a just God; and however enlightened they may be, so far as they are governed by these impressions in their conduct, their engagements may be relied on, and government will be secure. Now what other means can we hope will be as successful, in planting this impression on the mind, as the worship of God on the Sabbath? It is here, that every argument that can be placed before the human mind, from the importance of our present state of existence, and from the word of God, which is adapted to make this impression, is constantly sounding in his ears. There is not a sentence that we hear in the house of God, either in the preaching, the prayers, or praises of divine worship, but what is directly calculated to cherish such an impression. What multitudes are constrained, in order to comply with the dictates of custom, or to secure their popularity, to listen to religious instruction; who would not hear a syllable on such a subject from one month to another, were it not for the Sabbath!

While it is true, that governments where the worship of God is observed, may become a prey to division, and thus be ruined, because there will always be multitudes who do not believe nor act under the influence of the impressions we have named; it is equally true, that we need no knowledge of futurity to predict the certain destruction of any government, especially if its inhabitants are enlightened, where the Sabbath, and of course the worship of God, are not regarded.

It must be seen from these remarks, that every measure that is adopted, and every particle of influence that is exerted, either by example or in any other way, that weakens upon minds of men their obligation to observe the Sabbath, have a tendency the most direct and fatal to undermine and ruin a government. The work of destruction may be lingering, but it is certain; and if a government fall by such means, the materials that may be gathered from the ruins, will be wholly unfit to be incorporated into another. A leprosy will attach to them, more contagious, and at the same time more corrupting and despoiling, than ever adhered to the walls of a dwelling in ancient Israel. Thus it may be seen that the Sabbath is an appointment, of unspeakable importance to the world.

Q. What evidence have we, that the obligation to observe the Sabbath, is perpetual?

A. The first argument in proof of this will be drawn from the fact, that the injunction to observe the Sabbath, is contained in the Decalogue. It must appear not a little surprising, that the opinions of men should be as loose upon this subject as they often are, when it is so definitely mentioned and commanded in the law, and when every other requirement is acknowledged to be sacredly and perpetually binding. Did they deny their obligations to obey every part of the Decalogue, it would be more consistent. But what con-

scientious believer in the Bible ever pretends that the three first, or six last, of these commands, are not obligatory? What Christian is ever heard to contend that he is not under obligation to love God, to refrain from the worship of idols, and the profane use of the name of God? What Christian is heard to contend that children are not bound to love and obey their parents? that murder, fornication, slander, theft, &c. are not criminal? But if every other command is sacred, what plea can be made, for applying the separating knife to the fourth? It was recorded with the rest on the same tables of stone. When the first tables were broken, it was carefully preserved and engraved on the second. While it is uniformly acknowledged that the reason why this law was written upon *stone*, was that it might be distinguished from the Mosaic ritual, and to show that while *that* passed away, *this* must endure; by what fair means, can any part of it be set aside? What is more durable than stone,—and where the hand of God has written a command upon it, who shall take it upon him to obliterate it? Was there any intimation given, when amid the smoke and thunderings of Sinai, this law was announced from heaven, that this fourth command was not to be as perpetual as the other nine?

Q. Has not the fourth command been repealed?

A. We are sure that nothing of this character can be found in the Scriptures; but as this is often alleged, we shall examine the passages in which it is supposed to be contained. It is said that the Saviour "blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances, nailing it to his cross." In answer to this it may be said, that this passage refers, beyond all question, to those typical institutions, which had their fulfilment in the coming and death of Christ. It is plain to the understanding of a child, that there is nothing of this character in the Decalogue. Besides, it is not supposed, as we have already observed, that

the three first, and six last of these commands, were blotted out, and that men are under no obligation to love God or each other; what grounds then, can we have for supposing, that the fourth is abrogated? Another passage in which it is supposed by some, that the Sabbath is repealed, is the following: "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." *a* But this was spoken of the Jewish Sabbath, and if his declaring himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath, has repealed it, the Sabbath was never in force. The Son of Man is Lord of the Gospel: Is it therefore destitute of authority? But it is asserted again, that the Saviour violated the Sabbath.—That he and his disciples did many things upon the Sabbath which the superstitious Jews considered a violation, is readily admitted; but as an evidence that he did not mean it should be so considered, he refers for his justification to the conduct of David, when it is admitted by all that the Sabbath was in force. By this reference of our Saviour to the conduct of David, he showed beyond all possible doubt, that he viewed the Sabbath to be equally as obligatory, as in the days of David. Not the least intimation does he give, that the obligation had ceased, or was about to cease; which, if it had been true, he might have done with infinite ease. He *is* Lord of the Sabbath, and as such, has a right to arrange or dispose of it as he pleases. Let us then hear his decision on the subject. "Heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle shall pass from the law." *b* This passage inseparably rivets the fourth command to the other nine, until the dissolution of the world.

What God has thus solemnly joined together, let not man attempt to put asunder.

When our Lord had justified himself by showing what conduct had been justified in the days of David, he added, "The

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a Luke vi. 5 *b* Mat. v. 18.

Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Some have inferred a repeal of the Sabbath from this passage. But this it must be remembered, was spoken concerning the Creation Sabbath, or that which was established at the beginning of the world. The Sabbath *was* made for man, and that in great mercy, as we have seen by a view of the object for which it was appointed. There is but one other passage in the New Testament, which is thought to prove that the Sabbath is abrogated. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of any holy day, or of the new moon; or of the Sabbath days." *a* The term *Sabbath days* in this passage evidently refers to the Jewish Sabbath, because it is not used in the New Testament, to mean the first day of the week, or that day which the Apostles observed as holy time. After the change of the Sabbath, it was called the Lord's day, as will be shown in its proper place.

The Apostle was evidently endeavouring to guard his brethren against some Judaizing teachers, who were ready to condemn all that did not observe the seventh day. To have observed the seventh day with motives like these, would have been opposed to the gospel, as really as an adherence to the Mosaic ceremonies. There are but two or three passages in the Old Testament, which it is ever thought, disprove the perpetuity of the Sabbath. "Bring no more vain oblations; the new moons and Sabbaths, I cannot away with." *b* One single remark, will be sufficient to show, that the Sabbaths here mentioned, were some of the Jewish holidays. More than forty years after this period, this prophet in the most explicit manner, urged the importance of observing *the Sabbath*. The reader will be convinced of the truth of this beyond a doubt, by consulting the references. *c* There is a

a Col. ii 16. *b* Isa. i 13. *c* Isa. lviii. 13, and lvi 2, and lxvi. 23.

similar passage in the prophet Hosea, which is often cited by the enemies of the Sabbath. "And I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths." *a* The expression *her* Sabbaths, is not used in the Bible to mean the Sabbath of the Lord; but the phrases most commonly used to signify that day, are *the Sabbath*, and *my Sabbath*. May we not, in view of these remarks, confidently affirm, that there is nothing in the Bible containing the least intimation, of a formal repeal of the Sabbath?

But as further proof that the Sabbath is still in force, we remark that it will be observed in the millenium. Referring to that day, the prophet Isaiah observes, "And it shall come to pass from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." That the time here referred to is the millenium, is beyond a doubt; because it is represented to be in the New Heavens, and New Earth. *b* The same sentiment is exhibited by the prophet Ezekiel. *c* That the Sabbath was to continue after the commencement of the gospel dispensation, is plain from the direction of the Saviour. "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day." *d* The event referred to, was the destruction of Jerusalem.

Let us now take a summary view of the arguments in proof of this point. The Sabbath is found recorded in the moral law, every other part of which is acknowledged to be in force, and is declared by the Saviour to remain in force, "till heaven and earth pass away."—It is acknowledged by our Saviour when accused of violating it.—It was observed by the Apostles.—It was uniformly observed by the primitive Christians,* and will be observed in the millenium.

* Such is the testimony of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Peturius (*Dwight's Theology, Sermon* 106.)

a Hos. ii. 11. *b* Isa. lxvi 23 *c* Ezek. xliv. 24. *d* Mat. xxiv. 20.

Q. If the Sabbath be an institution of perpetual obligation, why is there nothing said about it in the history of the world, previous to the call of Abraham?

A. That this is no evidence that the institution had not existed from the beginning, is plain from the following consideration: The Sabbath is mentioned but four or five times in the whole Jewish writings, which contain a history of one thousand years; yet no person has the least doubt but that Nehemiah, and Isaiah, considered it as still in force. If any person be inclined to doubt this, he may consult the passages referred to in their writings. *a* Can it then be thought strange that it should not have been mentioned before the days of Abraham? Besides, what necessity could there be for repealing an institution, which must have been considered, at least by all the really pious, to have been instituted in commemoration of the work of creation? It was proclaimed to them by the return of every seventh day, by the voice of him who causeth the rising and the setting of the sun. An impression of this nature seems to have existed in the days of Moses. This, we are aware, is disputed by Dr. Paley and some others. They have also taken great pains to prove, that the institution of the Sabbath, is not perpetually binding. We shall now give the most important arguments which they advance in favour of their opinion, a brief and candid examination. It is said that the rulers of the congregation had no such impression, when they brought a complaint to Moses against the people, because they had collected on the sixth day, twice as much manna as on any other day of the week. In answer to this it may be observed, that Moses might not have acquainted the rulers, with the particular directions he had received concerning the manna, and they doubtless inferred from the general direction he had given, that no part of

a Neh. ix 14, and x 31, and xiii. 15. Isa. lvi 2, and lviii. 13.

what they gathered should be kept over night, which was perfectly applicable to all the other days in the week, that the people by collecting double the usual quantity were transgressing a divine command. But it is said again, that what was said by Moses on that occasion, amounts substantially to a new appointment of the Sabbath. But does not the conduct of which they complained, afford indisputable evidence that the *people*, had correct views of the subject? Does it not prove that they were aware of the division of time into weeks, and that no labour was allowed on the seventh day? That the answer of Moses to the rulers who brought the complaint, should be thought to contain a new appointment of the Sabbath, is not a little surprising. "And he said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day, the bread of two days" *a* We can scarcely conceive, wherein the declaration of Moses would have been different, if his eye had been fixed on the original institution, and he were proclaiming it to them, as a law of standing and perpetual obligation.

"This is that which the Lord *hath said.*" "The Lord hath given you the Sabbath day, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days." Does he not clearly imply that the impressions, and the conduct, of the common people were correct, and that they were justified by a known and important law?

Another argument to prove that the appointment was made by Moses and did not exist before, many derive from the fact, that Moses urges the observance of the Sabbath from different reasons, from those which are annexed to the Creation Sabbath. The reasons annexed to the Creation Sabbath, to

a Ex xvi. 23, 29.

secure its observance, are the following: "For in six days the Lord thy God made heaven and earth," &c. But that which is given by Moses, was the kindness of God in delivering them from Egyptian bondage. *a* The reason which is given by Moses why the Sabbath should be observed after the deliverance of Israel from their bondage, is clearly an *additional* reason. The reasons annexed to the Creation Sabbath had been repeatedly, and in circumstances the most solemn, exhibited before them; they had recently been the subjects of great and signal mercies, and as the observance of the Sabbath was an important part of divine service, what would be more reasonable than that the additional mercies they had received at the hand of God, should be stated as an additional reason, why they should serve him? Different reasons are given in different parts of the Bible, why we should embrace the gospel, but no one would infer from that circumstance that the gospel had ever been abrogated, or that our obligation to embrace it, is not perpetual.

Q. If the institution of the Sabbath was designed to be perpetually binding, why is it not expressly enjoined in the New Testament?

A. We are by no means willing to concede that it is not explicitly commanded in the New Testament. It must be apparent, from the remarks which have been already made, that every intimation that the law is still obligatory upon men, contains an injunction for the observance of the Sabbath. "Do we then make void the law through faith, (said the Apostle) God forbid; yea we establish the law." *b* The whole course of his reasoning was designed to show, that he considered the obligations of the law, to be continual. Since there is not the slightest intimation, either in the giving of the law, or in any after period, that the fourth command was not

a Deut. v. 15. *b* Rom. iii. 31.

as sacred and as continually binding as the rest, how could we expect that this command would be singled out and explicitly enjoined? The law that regulates affinity in marriage, is not repeated, nor enjoined in the New Testament; yet who supposes from this fact, that it is repealed, and that it would now be right for a man to marry his own daughter or sister?

Q. If the Sabbath be the same institution under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, why should it not be observed in a manner as strict and as holy, under the latter as the former; and why should not a violation of it, be punished with as severe *corporeal* punishments now, as it was under the former dispensation?

A. That we are not under obligation to observe the Sabbath, in a manner as holy as were the prophets, can never be proved either from the nature of the institution, or from the Bible; and of course the violation of it must be as great, if not a greater sin in us, than it was in them. Still it is far from being true, that the same kinds of punishment should be inflicted. Mankind are much more enlightened now, than they were in the days of Moses. There is an apparent propriety, in the course which God in his providence has pursued, in relation to this subject. When children are young and possess but little information, it is uniformly considered far more suitable to make use of corporeal punishments in correcting them, than when they are of sufficient age to weigh with seriousness, verbal reproof. Under the former dispensation, corporeal punishments were inflicted for many crimes; but under the latter, men are uniformly pointed forward for their reward, to the retributions of a future world. The case before us is not singular in this respect. The child who was disobedient to his parents, under the former, was to be stoned to death. No one can suppose that disobedience to parents is not as criminal now, as it was

then; neither does any one imagine that the disobedient child is now, to be stoned to death.

Q. What evidence have we that the day, to be observed as the Sabbath, is changed; or that to observe the first day of the week, is a compliance with the fourth command?

A. It was necessary that the day should be changed, in order that the object for which the institution was appointed, might be accomplished. It has been already shown, that the object for which the appointment was made, was to preserve the worship of the true God in the world. When this object required a change in the day, it is apparent that the nature of the institution was not effected. That the object did require this change in the day, will be seen from the following consideration.

So long as the Sabbath was observed in commemoration of the work of creation, and in this way preserved the worship of the true God, so long it remained as a test of religion. Such as observed it, gave evidence that they believed in the true God, and in all that he had revealed of himself to the world. By this means, the observance of the Sabbath became a test, by which might be determined who were the worshippers of the true God, *in distinction from unbelievers*. But when the Messiah appeared in the world, if the day had not been changed to commemorate his resurrection, the observance of it would not have shown who were believers, in distinction from unbelievers. It would have no longer remained as a test, to determine the true worshippers of God. Had it not been changed, such as adhered to the Jewish form of worship, and wilfully rejected Christ, could not have been distinguished by the Sabbath, from real Christians. In this case, the institution would not have answered the purpose for which it was appointed. On the other hand, it will be seen that no individual, that believed and kept the first day of the

week, in commemoration of his resurrection, would disbelieve that God had created the world; and of course, the observance of *the first day of the week would accomplish all the purposes for which the Creation Sabbath was appointed.* It is plain therefore, that the institution by being changed to the first day of the week, served to distinguish the real servants of God from his enemies, and answered at the same time, the same purpose as the ancient Sabbath.

2. The Sabbath was set apart or sanctified as an *institution*, and not the day on which it was appointed. This will be seen by a careful reading of the command that contains the institution. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the *Sabbath* day and hallowed it." *a* Here it may be seen is a distinction between the seventh day, and the Sabbath day, which clearly shows that the institution, was independent of the day on which it was appointed. Although the Sabbath was *then* on the seventh day, it was the Sabbath, and not the seventh day that was sanctified. And if the institution existed independently of the day on which it was appointed, then the day may be changed, while the institution remains the same.

3. The change of the day, seems to be clearly intimated by the Apostle, in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. Concerning the Saviour he observes, "For he that has entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." As it is said in the preceding verse, "That God did rest the seventh day from all his works," it is evident, that the Apostle is here comparing the work of the Saviour in the redemption of men, with that of the Father in the creation of the world. As the Father, when he had finished his

a Ex. xx 9, 11.

work, established a day of rest, so the Son, when he had finished his more important work, had a day appointed by the observance of which, it might be commemorated.

4. As a still more conclusive argument, it may be observed that the first day of the week, was observed by the disciples, and all the primitive Christians. It was their custom to meet on the first day of the week, to attend to the ordinances of the gospel. *a* It will certainly not be supposed, by any candid inquirer after the truth, that the Apostles did not understand the will of their Master. As he was pleased himself to meet with them, after his resurrection on that day, it is but reasonable to suppose that they had received his instructions on the subject. It was on this account, that the first day of the week was called the "Lord's day." It was observed to commemorate his glorious work. In addition to this, it has been already shown that all the Churches, during the first centuries, observed it as the Sabbath. It cannot be supposed that the Apostles would be left, not only to mistake the will of the Lord, but to convey to their successors, an important error in Christian practice.

Lest some should be inclined to doubt, whether the primitive Christians observed the first day of the week, we will subjoin a few extracts, from the history of those days. Ignatius, who was a companion of the Apostles, says expressly, "Let us no longer sabatize, (by which he meant keeping the Jewish Sabbath) but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose." In another passage, he calls it the "queen of days." Melito, it is said, wrote a whole book concerning the first day of the week. Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, in their Apologies for Christianity, speak expressly of stated Christian assemblies on that day. Irenæus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who lived in the second century, says, "On

a John xx. 19, 26. Acts xx. 7, and 1 Cor. xvi 2.

the Lord's day every one of us keeps the Sabbath." Indeed, nothing is more common, than to meet with testimonies to this amount, in all the histories of the Church which refer to that period.

We have now shown that the Sabbath is an institution independent of the day on which it is observed—that the object for which it was appointed, required that the day should be changed—that the Saviour evidently designed, that the first day of the week should be observed, to commemorate the work of redemption, and that the Apostles and their successors did observe it for that purpose. We cannot but feel a confidence, that every individual who comes to this subject with an honest and open mind, will be satisfied with the arguments which have been advanced. He will be convinced that although the day is changed, the institution remains, and its sacred obligation is not at all diminished. On the whole, the Sabbath is an institution of so much importance to the world, it is so well adapted to promote the interests of piety in the heart, and it is so important as a means in supporting the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, we may confidently affirm that no Christian, acting understandingly, will ever wish to do away upon the minds of men, the sacredness of its obligation.

Q. In what manner is the Sabbath to be observed?

A. 1. It is to be observed, by refraining from all unnecessary labour "In it thou shalt not do any work." *a*

The labour of harvesting, although it is usually the most urgent of any in the course of the year, is expressly forbidden. "In earing time and harvest, thou shalt rest." *b*

2. It is to be observed from the beginning to the end of the day. "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day, there shall be to you an holy day." *c* "And it came to pass,

a Ex. xx. 9, 10. *b* Ex xxxiv. 21. *c* Ex xxxv. 2.

that when the gates of Jerusalem *began to be dark, before the Sabbath;* I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till *after* the Sabbath." *a*

3. It is not to be spent in idleness, but in the active service of God. "And it shall come to pass, from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." *b* On this subject, there is a looseness in the opinions of men, on which no sincere Christian can reflect, but with pain. If the day be not spent in hard labour, or in plays and amusements, multitudes seem not to have a thought, but that it is employed according to its original design. Although their minds are constantly in a state of sluggishness, and destitute of all serious thoughts, or employed about the interests of the present world, yet their consciences will not reprove them. How stupid and irrational is such a course! The Sabbath is that part of our time, which God has reserved for *his* service. He has a right to demand the *whole;* and since he has claimed but *one seventh part*, to be devoted exclusively to his service, shall we defraud him of that? Were a tenant, who was required to improve a part of his time in the service of his landlord, and the remainder in his own, to lounge and drowse away all that which should be employed for his landlord, in what point of light must his conduct be viewed? Some attempt to justify this course, because the Sabbath is appointed for a day of rest. This however is far, very far from being agreeable to the direction of the Most High. "And call the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him *not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure;* nor speaking thine own words." *c*

Q. What are we to understand by works of *necessity*, or when is it justifiable to labour on the Sabbath?

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a Neh. xiii. 19. *b* Isa lxvi 23. *c* Isa. lviii 13.

A. *It is justifiable to relieve distress, preserve property, or life, which nothing but a miracle would otherwise relieve or preserve, and which of course it would be presumption, to trust with providence.* As when a man is unavoidably suffering with hunger, or his beast has fallen into a pit, or his house has taken fire, &c. In such cases it would be evidently presumption, to rely on providence. *a* When necessity is created by previous and heedless neglect, though it may be a duty to prevent pain, or preserve life, the guilt contracted is not less than that which is contracted by a violation of the Sabbath. If a man make no provisions for his family, when it is in his power, and when they ought to be made, let him be as anxious as he may, when the cry of hunger has reached his ears and it is beyond his power to satisfy it, he is accountable for the pain his carelessness has occasioned. *b*

Q. If we are commanded to labour for six days, and do all our work in them, is it not wrong to employ any part of *them* for religious purposes?

A. 1. The expression "*do all thy work,*" implies that all that labour which is done to promote the temporal interests of men, ought to be done within the six days.

2. If this objection be viewed as solid, then we may infer from the command, to "pray always," that nothing else ought ever to be done, but to pray.

3. If there be any weight to this objection, it bears more heavily on the Saviour, and his Apostles, than on any other individuals. Very few if any at this day, can testify, "That by the space of *three years* they ceased not to warn every one night and day, with tears." *c*

4. Such as urge this objection, may be reminded, that unless they are very careful to employ the Sabbath for no other but religious purposes, and the rest of the week for none but

a Luke vi. 1—11. *b* Ex. xvi. 27. *c* Acts xx. 31.

hard labour, they show that they are led to make the objection, rather *from a disaffection to the service of God*, than a fear of misimproving their time. On the whole, the Sabbath must appear to every enlightened Christian, an institution of immense importance. Opposition to it, is opposition to the best interests of mankind. No parent can feel that he has done his duty to his family, or to the world, till he has done all that is in his power, both by his example and his instructions, to have it sacredly observed.

Dweght's Theology.—Dr. Lathrop.

SECTION XVII.

Baptism.

Q. What is baptism?

A. Baptism is a religious ceremony performed by the application of water, to a proper subject, by an appointed officer, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Q. What are the objects for which the ordinance of baptism was appointed?

A. *That the people of God might evince their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be furnished with a token or testimony of the covenant, into which they have entered with God.*

Q. What evidence have we that baptism is an institution to be continued in the Church?

A. No reason can be given why it was practised by the Apostles, which would not show it to be equally important, in every succeeding age. Our Saviour directed his disciples to baptize, and the same direction was given by them to their successors, and thus the ordinance has been handed down to the present period.

The command of the Saviour seems to have had no more reference to that period, than to every period that should follow. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *a* This command was understood by the Apostles and their successors, as adapted to every succeeding generation. There is no principle upon which they could rationally have understood it otherwise. Such a command must be considered as obligatory, till it is obeyed, which it is certain has never yet been done. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." *b* There is not the slightest intimation given, but that this would be equally true and important, in every succeeding age. The immediate successors of the Apostles practised it, as appears by their controversies about the time when it should be administered.

Q. Who are the proper subjects of baptism?

A. Believers, and their children. As this has been a subject which has occasioned a long and unhappy controversy, it cannot be expected that all the arguments on both sides, in a work like this, can be distinctly noticed. We can only give a brief view of some of the arguments, which go to support what we conceive to be the truth, and then notice some of the most important objections.

In supporting the answer we have now given, with regard to the subjects of baptism, it is presumed that no arguments are necessary, to show that believing *adults*, have a right to this ordinance. This is readily admitted by all who believe that water baptism is a divine ordinance, and is to be continued in the Church. The only question which can with propriety be agitated, is, whether the children of believers, are subjects of this ordinance. And,

1. The covenant of grace, or the new covenant, and the

a Mat. xxviii. 19. *b* Mark xvi 16.

covenant made with Abraham, *are the same.* "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." *a* "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." *b* "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." *c* In the first of these passages, the blessing promised is the same as in the promise made to Abraham. "*I will be a God to thee,*" and "*I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*" That this is a spiritual blessing, which is here promised, no one who reflects with seriousness upon the subject, can doubt. Let the privilege contained in this promise be taken from one of the saints in heaven; let it be taken for instance, from the Apostle Paul; let him be no longer able to view God as his God, and what would there be in heaven to render him happy? The passage quoted from Acts, recognizes the same relation between *parents and their children,* as the promise made to Abraham. "For the promise is unto you and to your children," &c. It is often objected that the expression "The promise is unto you and to your children," means no more than that the promise is unto you (*if you believe, and to your children if they believe.*) This explanation would make the Apostle to say, "The promise is to you and your children," but not because they are *your* children, nor because they are related to you, *no more than if they were pagans;* but if they live and become believers, then the promise will be to them as it is now to you. Now if the relation between parents and their children, and if the blessing promised be the same in the new covenant, as in that which was made with Abraham, the children of believers must be fit subjects for that ordinance, which answers most

a Gen xvii. 7. *b* Heb. viii. 10. *c* Acts ii 39.

of the purposes under the new, that circumcision did under the old dispensation.

Children, in consequence of their connexion with their parents, were admitted under the former dispensation to circumcision, which was a religious rite. This it may be presumed no one will be inclined to doubt. They were admitted to that rite which was a token of the covenant *between God and Abraham*, and which was a *seal of the righteousness of Abraham's faith*. If this relation to their parents and to the Church is the same now, as under the former dispensation when they were admitted to circumcision, why should they not be admitted to baptism? That baptism so far takes the place of circumcision that it is to be applied to the same subjects, is evident,

1. From the fact that there is no other ordinance under the new dispensation, that answers the purpose of circumcision under the old. It is generally admitted that the *Lord's supper*, occupies the same place in the Church now, that the passover did under the former dispensation. It must be difficult to see, wherein the privileges of believers under the latter, are equal to what they were under the former, if there be no rite answering to that of circumcision.

2. Baptism is urged upon the same principle, and for the same reason under the new dispensation, that circumcision was under the old. "Repent and be baptized every one of you—for the promise is unto you and your children, &c." *a* Of circumcision it is said, "It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." *b* Abraham was required to receive circumcision as a testimony that *he believed in God*, and that God had *entered into a covenant with him which included his children*. "And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had,

a Acts ii. 38, 39. *b* Gen. xvii. 11.

yet being uncircumcised." *a* "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." *b* The two cases then stand thus: Abraham was required *to believe, and be circumcised, because God had made a covenant with him and his seed. The hearers of the Apostles were required to repent and be baptized, because the promise was unto them and to their children.*

In view of this similarity of the use to which these two rites were applied under the two different dispensations, can there be a serious doubt, but that they were designed to occupy the same place in the Church? And as an evidence that the promise mentioned by the Apostle, was the same as the covenant made with Abraham, let the candid reader inquire whether he can find another in all the Old Testament, which required *faith in parents and which included their children.* Says the Apostle, "The promise is unto you and to your children, &c." *c* How similar is this phraseology, to that of the Apostle Paul: "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to *the promise.*" *d* "Now, we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." *e*

3. Baptism stands for the same sign, under the new dispensation, as circumcision under the old. The Scriptures we have already quoted, show that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith. With regard to baptism, it is said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." *f* If faith were required in order to baptism, then baptism must be viewed as a *token* of faith. And if it be a seal or token of faith, it must be a seal of its righteousness; for without this, faith would be of no importance.

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a Rom iv. 11. *b* Gen xvii. 7. *c* Acts ii 39. *d* Gal. iii. 29. *e* Gal. iv. 28. *f* Acts viii. 37.

4. When a child was circumcised, it received a name. "When they came together to circumcise the child, they called his name Zacharias." *a* "When eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus." *b* So it is in the baptism of children.

5. Both baptism and circumcision were practised by the Apostles at the same time. The Apostles *allowed the Church at Jerusalem, to continue the practice of circumcision, long after baptism had been adopted by the Gentile Churches.* The most decisive evidence of this can be obtained by looking at the history of the labours of the Apostles. In the fifteenth chapter of Acts, we are told that some of the brethren came down from Judea to Antioch, and taught the Gentile converts, that they must be circumcised after the manner of Moses, or they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas, after they had no small disputation with these brethren, were sent by the Church at Antioch, to confer with the Apostles and elders on the subject at Jerusalem. Now the question on which they were sent was simply, whether the *Gentiles* must be circumcised; and if circumcision had been abolished in all the Churches, Jewish as well as Gentile, *how could the least doubt have remained on the subject?* The Apostles found some after they arrived at Jerusalem, who contended that it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles, and command them to keep the law of Moses. It cannot be supposed that these brethren could have deemed it the duty of the Gentile brethren to receive circumcision, when they had not received it, and did not practise it themselves. Here then it is certain, after a large Church had been established at Jerusalem, part of them still held to the practice of circumcision, and were in fellowship with the rest. Such of the Jews as believed and were circumcised, were called the *cir-*

a Luke i. 59. *b* Luke ii. 21.

cumcision, and the Gentiles the *uncircumcision*. The Apostle Paul tells us that he was sent to one of these classes, and the Apostle Peter to the other. "But when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter, For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles. And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go unto the heathen and they unto the circumcision." *a* In the same chapter we have an account of the dissimulation of Peter. Paul tells us that he was to be blamed, because, previous to the coming of certain individuals from James, he ate with the Gentiles, but after their coming he withdrew. Here then we see Peter, one of the Apostles, who laboured among the circumcision, or the believing Jews, refusing to eat with the Gentiles. But as a still more conclusive argument that circumcision was for some length of time practised in the Church at Jerusalem, we turn to the twenty-first chapter of the Acts. When Paul went to Jerusalem for the last time, which was about the year A. D. 61, the great charge that was brought against him, and for which he was persecuted, was that *he had taught the Gentiles where he had been, not to circumcise their children.* "Thou seest brother how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses; saying *that they ought not to circumcise their children*, neither to walk after the customs." *b* Here then it is plain that thousands who believed in Christ, believed it to be a solemn duty to give up their children to God in

a Gal ii. 7, 8, 9. *b* Acts xxi. 20, 21.

circumcision, *twenty-eight years after their establishment as a Christian Church.* Some of the Apostles were then, and had been from their establishment, labouring among them. Nothing then can be more certain, than that circumcision was admitted by the Apostles among the *Jews*, while baptism was practised among the *Gentiles.* Perhaps some may object to this that the Apostle Paul declared to the Galatians that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing. To this it may be replied, that the Apostle uniformly insisted that believing *Gentiles*, should be baptized. This also was the decision of the council at Jerusalem, and this *the believers at Jerusalem admitted*, at the time they were so enraged with the Apostle for teaching the Jews that they ought not to circumcise their children. "*As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing.*" *a* But the great reason why the Apostle made this declaration to the Galatians, while he admitted this rite in Jewish Churches, was doubtless this:— Certain corrupt teachers were among the Galatians, endeavouring to alienate their affections from the Apostle. By these teachers, they were taught that it was their duty to be circumcised and to observe *all the sacrifices of the former dispensation.* The Apostle saw that if they were circumcised, they would place no dependence on the merits of Christ, but would depend entirely on their own works. They had no correct views of the covenant, but the believing Jews had. That it was owing to the decision of that council, concerning the circumcision of the Gentiles, and *their mistaken views of the object of circumcision*, that he was unwilling that they should be circumcised, is certain from the following fact: It cannot be supposed that he would be willing, *for the sake of gratifying the Jews, to place Timothy where Christ would*

a Acts xxi. 25.

profit him nothing. The only remaining argument which we would suggest in proof of the point before us is, the declaration of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian Church. This Church was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The question seems to have been agitated among them, whether baptism of itself, was sufficient. "As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk; and so ordain I in all Churches Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised; is any called in uncircumcision? let him not become circumcised." *a* Unless the Apostle does mean in this passage, that baptism or circumcision either, if received with proper views of the covenant, will answer every purpose, it is difficult, to say the least, to understand him. The arguments then, by which we would prove that baptism takes the place of circumcision, are these:

1. There is no other rite to supply its place in the Church.

2. Baptism is enjoined upon men from the same principle, and is a token of the same covenant.

3. Both are the seal of the righteousness of faith.

4. The mode of administration with both, in many respects, is the same; and,

Lastly, both were practised and admitted by the Apostles at the same time. To these it might be added, that they had both the same spiritual signification.

It is now left to the decision of the candid reader, whether the point be proved, and if it be, is not the question relative to the admission of the children of believers to the ordinance of baptism, established with equal clearness and certainty? We see not how the argument can be evaded. If baptism does take the place of circumcision, and if the Christian Church at Jerusalem, for twenty eight years at least, did admit and practice the circumcision of children, as has now

a 1 Cor. vii, 17, 18.

been proved, the baptism of children must be admitted of course.

Another argument with which we prove that the children of believers have a right to this ordinance, is drawn from the *perpetuity* of the Church. We can scarcely conceive that a subject can be more explicitly and definitely stated, than the identity of the Church in all ages, is stated in the Bible. The Apostle Paul, while addressing himself to the Church at Rome, observes, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree: Boast not against the branches; but if thou boast thou bearest not the root but the root thee. Thou wilt say then the branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God, on them which fell severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in; for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these which be natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?" *a* It is our firm and unshaken belief that no explanation can be given of this passage, which will satisfy the mind of any understanding and conscientious reader, which will not support decidedly the perpetuity of the Church. If with some, we believe the root to be Christ, then the patriarchs and prophets once stood in him, and were connected with him. If we believe that

a Rom. xi. 17—24.

Abraham, and the rest of the patriarchs and prophets, were the root, because they enjoyed the covenants and promises, then when the Gentiles are graffed in as branches of the same tree, they must be a part of the same Church. Or if we believe the root to be the covenant made with Abraham, the same inference will follow, if possible with more clearness and certainty. To his Ephesian brethren the Apostle remarks, "Now therefore," (since the partition wall is broken down and we are both reconciled unto God in one body,) "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles, and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." *a* When the Church is compared to the branches of a vine, and as such represented as connected with the Lord Jesus, *b* the Saviour must have referred to the Jewish Church. The gospel dispensation had not commenced, the testator was not dead, and the seal could not as yet be broken from the new covenant. Besides, the Lord Jesus Christ is expressly called a minister of circumcision. *c*

The Church is every where represented as one. "Christ is head over all things *to the Church*." *d* "As Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." *e* Such phraseology is adopted uniformly throughout the Bible. Moses, it is said, "Was that prophet which was *in the Church* in the wilderness." *f* It was said in prophecy that the Lord Jesus Christ should *come to Zion*, "And shall come *to his temple*." *g* Many things that belong to the manner of worship, under the former dispensation, are abrogated, and others are changed; but the Church itself remains the same. The only objection

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a Eph. ii. 19—21. *b* John xv. 1—5 *c* Rom. xv. 8 *d* Eph. i. 22. *e* Eph. v. 25. *f* Acts vii. 38. *g* Isa. lix. 20. Mal. iii. 1.

of importance, that is ever made to this sentiment, that the Church in all ages is the same, is the imperfection of the Jewish Church. It is thought to be derogatory to the character of the Redeemer, that a Church so corrupt should be his, or belong to what is called his body. But let the serious reader look at the Old Testament Church during the worst apostacies in its whole history, and see if he can discover any thing that will exceed the corruption of the Christian Church, during the sixth or seventh century. But in both "*They are not all Israel that are of Israel.*" As great purity of life was required, under the old, as under the new dispensation. The command given to Abraham, when the covenant of grace was established with him was, "Walk before me and be thou perfect." *a* Does not the law require a service as spiritual, as any thing that can be found in the New Testament? We do not see but that it must be admitted, that the Church in all ages is the same. The inference from this sentiment in favour of the point before us, the baptism of children, is plain. If the Church be the same in all ages, and if children were once admitted to an ordinance which held the same place in the Church that baptism does now, must they not be admitted to baptism? What could our Saviour mean by the declaration, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," *b* unless it be this: You have the form and the privileges of the Church now, but they shall be taken from you, and given to the Gentiles?——Another argument in proof that children should be baptized, is derived from the practice, of the immediate descendants of the Apostles. Irenæus, who lived in the second century, and was well acquainted with Polycarp, who was John's disciple, declares expressly, *that the Church learned to baptize children from the Apostles.*

a Gen. xvii. 1. *b* Mat. xxi. 43.

Origen, in the third century, testifies to the same poi In the year A. D. 254, only about 160 years from the deat of St. John, a council of sixty-six ministers was called, to d termine whether children might be baptized *before*, or *after*, they were eight days old. In a discussion which continued some days, there was not a suggestion but what it was a dut to baptize them; but the simple question was whether they must be baptized, when they were precisely eight days old. It would seem morally impossible for the whole Church, to have changed its practice in 160 years, so that a vestige should not remain of its former opinions. Ambrose, who wrote in about 270 after the Apostles, declares that the baptism c children had been the practice of the Apostles. It is said b Dr. Wall, upon a most careful inquiry, that until the ye 1522, there is not so much as a man to be found, who h spoken against infant baptism, except a small number in France, in the twelfth century, who denied the possibility of their salvation. But this sect soon disappeared. Tertullian, who lived about one hundred years after the Apostles, advised to the delay of baptism, not because it was not a duty to baptize children, but because he imagined that sins committed after baptism, were unpardonable. Could it have been so uniform a custom, with the immediate descendants of the Apostles, to baptize their children, had they not received the nstitution from the Aposties themselves? Further proof might be obtained from those passages, which are usually brought forward in this controversy, and from the fact that households were baptized by the Apostles, would our limits admit; but fearing that we shall extend this article to an undue length, we will only refer the reader to some Scriptures he may profitably consult on the subject. *a*

Q. Is not something required of the subject in order to baptism, of which infants are not capable?

a 1 Cor. vii. 14. 2 Tim. i. 5. Acts xvi. 15. 1 Cor. i. xvi.

A. Nothing more is required of the subject for baptism, than for circumcision. It was required of Abraham, that he should believe. The Apostle tells us that he received circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised. When adults, who have never been baptized, receive this ordinance, is it not a token of the faith which they have, being unbaptized? This is uniformly the case with adults. That faith should be required of adults, does by no means prove that children, as in the case of circumcision, may be admitted on the faith of their parents. Something is required of every individual, indiscriminately, in order to salvation, of which infants are not capable; but no person would contend from this, that they cannot be saved. "He that believeth not shall be damned." *a*

Q. Can it be right to baptize children, without an *explicit command* for doing it?

A. There are many things, which are acknowledged by all serious Christians to be duty, for which we can find no explicit command. Female communion, and the observance of the first day of the week, are of this character. Infant baptism stands on the same ground as the Christian Sabbath. The Apostles took the Sabbath as they found it, only observing a different day, to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. The institution, though changed in regard to the day on which it is observed, remains substantially the same. They found the Church in the practice of dedicating her children.—This institution they continued, only changing the mode of dedication, from circumcision to baptism. With far greater propriety we might urge the opposers of infant baptism, to show an express *abrogation of infant dedication*. It would be absurd to expect an express command for their dedication, while an institution to that amount already exist-

a Mark xvi. 16

ed. The question under consideration, is amply answered in what we have already said, showing that baptism takes the place of circumcision. If baptism, as we have already proved, does take the place of circumcision, which was once the seal of the covenant, the children of believers must be admitted to that ordinance, which is now the seal of the same covenant.

Q. If baptism take the place of circumcision, what authority have we for baptizing females?

A. 1. This authority is derived from two sources. It is a fact that females, though they did not themselves receive a mark of dedication to God under the former dispensation, yet they were considered as standing in the males. No uncircumcised person was allowed to eat the passover, yet that females partook of it, will not be disputed.

2. We derive our authority to baptize females from the Apostles. "They were baptized both men and women." [a] If we are required to produce authority for admitting females to the table, or for observing the first day of the week as the Sabbath, we have no other authority that we can produce, only the example of the Apostles. And in the case of female communion, we have no express account that they were admitted by the Apostles. We are obliged to depend on an *inference* that we draw from the history of their labours. With regard to the Sabbath, the Apostles, while under the influence of divine inspiration, were led to observe the first, instead of the seventh day of the week; yet it was the Sabbath still, as really as before this change. So it was with the case before us. A rite by which children were dedicated to God was changed by them, and after its change it was applied to both sexes instead of one. To this they undoubtedly considered themselves as expressly directed by the great Redeemer. In

[a] Acts viii 12.

that command which may be said to contain their commission, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name," &c. *a* they were warranted in the course they pursued. *Having always been taught the important duty of dedicating children, it was natural for them to understand it as a command, to go and disciple, or bring over to the faith,* all nations, observing this change in the mode of affixing the seal of discipleship;—instead of circumcision, they were to use baptism. As this was a seal which might be applied to both sexes with equal convenience, it certainly cannot be supposed that its application to both, will evince it to be a different rite, and one designed to answer an entirely different purpose in the Church. How can we believe that they could have understood the Saviour, as cutting off at a stroke the infant seed of believers, from all the blessings of the covenant, and not a single remark have been excited by the decision? From the known enmity and bitterness of the Jews, can it be supposed that an innovation as important as they would have deemed this, would have passed entirely unnoticed?

Q. Did not the covenant made with Abraham include temporal blessings; and was not circumcision a mark of national descent?

A. It has often appeared to us not a little surprising that this objection should ever be deemed as weighty as it often is. It is true that temporal mercies were included in the promise, but if this be an evidence that the covenant itself is purely temporal, what shall we say of the gospel, which the Apostle tells us "hath the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come?" But let us inquire how the Apostle understood this promise. It is a common but important remark, that Scripture is the best interpreter of itself. The promise

a Mat. xxviii. 19.

made to Abraham was as follows: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, all the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." *a* With regard to the first part of this promise, "I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee," and the latter clause, "I will be their God," there can be scarcely a doubt, but that it refers to mercies of a spiritual nature. In the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, where we find one of the most unequivocal promises of the future glory of the Church, in which God promises the children of Israel, that he will *cleanse them from all their idols, give them a new heart, put his Spirit within them, cause them to walk in his statutes, and bring them into the land which he gave to their fathers*, he closes this list of mercies with an expression, borrowed from the covenant made with Abraham: "And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." *b* When St. John saw the New Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven, he heard a great voice saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be *with them, and be their God*." *c* Can a doubt remain whether this promise refers to spiritual things? Concerning that part of the promise in which the land of Israel is mentioned, it is equally certain, that the Apostles understood it as referring to the heavenly Canaan. Of Abraham it is said by Stephen, "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on, yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him." *d* The Apostle Paul tells us that "Abraham, when he was called to go out

a Gen. xvii. 7, 8. *b* Ezek xxxvi 25 -28. *c* Rev. xxi 3. *d* Acts vii 5.

into the land which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country;" but he indulges no suspicion but that God will faithfully fulfil his promise, for he adds, "*For he looked* for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." It was in that city, that he saw the fulfilment of the promise. Again he adds, concerning the offspring of Abraham, "These all died in faith, *not having* received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and was persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." *a* The reader is desired to read this chapter to the seventeenth verse, and then decide with honesty and seriousness, whether the covenant made with Abraham referred wholly to temporal blessings. We are surprised to hear it said that circumcision is a mark of national descent merely, when the Apostle, as we have already seen, declared it to be *a seal of the righteousness of faith.*" *b* It doubtless came eventually to be considered, as answering the purposes of a mark of national descent. This however was merely a *natural consequence* from the peculiar circumstances of the Jews. They were the only people who had the forms of true religion on earth. Their government was a kind of Theocracy. They had no other laws but such as they had received directly from God. To illustrate this subject, and show what we mean by saying it was a natural consequence, let us suppose that the religion of Christ had been embraced by the inhabitants of one of the South Sea Islands. The inhabitants of every other island about them, remain in idolatry. Being entirely destitute of any rational or just government, they resolve to be governed by the laws contained in the Bible. In the Bible, they learn that it is the duty of every individual to repent and be baptized; and suppose that

a Heb. xi. 8, 9, 13–16. *b* Rom. iv. 11.

they understand from the reason which is assigned, "the promise is to you and your children," that this is the ordinance by which their children were to be received into the same relation to them and the Church, as that in which Jewish children stood by their circumcision. Now after they had practised upon these principles a number of years, their baptism will become as a *natural consequence*, a mark of national distinction. Every person who has received this mark, will be considered as belonging to that Island or nation. This however every person must see, *was not the object for which they adopted the institution.* They adopted it as a seal of the covenant.

Q. If baptism take the place of circumcision as an ordinance in the Church, why should not the children of believers be admitted to the table of the Lord?

A. Although this is thought to be an objection of great weight, there are some things, which those who urge it, must have overlooked. Although children of all ages received the first passover, yet it is evident that they did not understand the command as requiring parents ever afterward, to bring their children till they were twelve years old. When our Lord was twelve years old, his parents took him up to the feast of the passover, "*According to the manner* of the feast." *a* Although his parents went yearly, when he was twelve years of age and not before, *did the custom of the feast* require them to bring him. This is also according to Hircanus in Josephus, B. 12, Chap. 4. This feast was provided for such as were old enough to inquire, "What mean ye by this service?" and present with their own hands, an offering to God. *b*

But if we suppose that children were uniformly admitted to the passover, it does by no means follow, that they are to be

a Luke ii. 42. *b* Ex xii, 25—28. Deut. xvi. 16, 17.

admitted to the table of the Lord. Circumcision was a token of the *Abrahamic* covenant. The passover was a rite purely *Mosaic*, or in other words, it belonged *to the Sinai covenant*. Circumcision was practised as a token of the covenant, more than four hundred years before the passover existed. *It is then undeniably certain, that the object for which circumcision was given, was not as a preparation for the passover.* Circumcision, the Saviour tells us, "*Was not of Moses, but of the fathers.*" The ceremonial law, with all its rites, was superceded by the gospel; but the Abrahamic covenant remains.

"And this I say that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul that it should make the promise of none effect." *a* If circumcision existed, and the object for which it was given was accomplished four hundred years before the existence of the passover, on the supposition that children by virtue of their circumcision were admitted to the passover, it affords not the least argument that by virtue of baptism, they may be admitted *to another rite.* There is a sense in which it may be said that the Lord's Supper holds the same place in the Church, that was held by the passover; and yet every person may see that the objects for which they were appointed, were entirely different. Both give an opportunity of uniting in the expression of friendship to each other, and of gratitude to God; but while the passover only commemorates a signal deliverance, the Lord's Supper is designed to commemorate the sufferings and death of Christ.

Q. What benefit can it be to children, to have them baptized?

A. As this is an objection with which we often meet, charity would lead us to believe that its impiety is not seen

a Gal. iii 17.

by those who make it. The question which is more becoming us is, whether it be a divine ordinance. If it be a divine ordinance, it is to be hoped there is no one that would call its utility in question. If, as we trust we have already proved, this ordinance takes the place of circumcision, it is plain that we might with the same propriety inquire, what good resulted from circumcision. To a question like this, the Apostle has furnished us with an answer. "What profit is there in circumcision? *Much every way.* Chiefly because unto them were committed the Oracles of God." "*For what if some did not believe?* Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid." *a* The Apostle here very happily meets the identical objection that is made to the baptism of children. What if some who receive this ceremony do not believe? Does their unbelief prove that the same rite may not in other cases be an important means of grace? If some children, who have received the ordinance of baptism, continue in unbelief till they perish, how does that prove but that in other cases, it is the means of salvation? Further, this question may be answered by taking another view of the subject. In the covenant which exists between the believing parent and God, there is an engagement upon the side of both parties. The parent engages to walk before God and be faithful, while the great Jehovah on his part, is pleased in mercy to promise, that he will be a God to the parent and to his seed. Baptism is a seal, or token of this agreement. In addition to other important purposes, this seal by being placed upon the forehead of his child, can scarcely fail to remind him every time he casts his eye upon his child, of the solemn obligation he has taken upon himself. The only question that remains now to be settled is this: Will that parent be more likely to pray for his child and feel the importance of

a Rom. iii. 1, 2, 3.

instructing him for God, who has solemnly promised to do it, and who by a significant and instructive token is continually reminded of that promise, than if he had not made this engagement, and had no monitor of this kind to remind him of his duty? If means are important in other cases, this question must be answered in the affirmative. There is no one who conscientiously believes in the Bible, but what believes in the importance of the use of means. And why should we make a profession, and solemnly covenant to be faithful in the service of God, if we are not more likely to do it in consequence of such an engagement?

But let us view this subject in reference to facts. With regard to these, the author can state only the results of his own observation, assuring the reader that so far as he has had an opportunity of consulting his brethren, he finds their experience to be as favourable to the doctrine of infant baptism as his own. The author has been permitted to witness three general revivals of religion. Among those who were called as we trust by an "holy calling," the number of such as had received baptism in their childhood, when compared with such as had not, were on an average more than four to one. Now if we call to mind that there are double the number of children *at least*, who have not received this ordinance to those who have, in those places where these revivals have existed, we shall see that the result is still more favourable to this institution. The result is, that the prospects of those children that are given up in this ordinance, when compared to those who are not, are as eight to one. If it should be said that such children are within the hearing of the gospel, and are the subjects of other means, and that this is the reason rather than because they are in the covenant, that they are converted; it is readily admitted that the reason why they are converted is because they are favoured with these means.

and from this principle is it not evident that the more solemnly the parent binds himself, and of course the more faithful he is in the use of means, especially such as prayer and religious instruction; the more favourable is the prospect, that his children will be made heirs of the grace of God?

Q. If the covenant made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, why did it not secure the salvation of all his literal seed?

A. We have already observed that there was an engagement on the part of Abraham, and so after him on that of every believing parent, as well as on the part of God. If Abraham, or any other believing parent fail of fulfilling his engagement, *though he himself may be saved*, the salvation of his children, on the ground of the promise, cannot be inferred from the covenant. Men may be the subjects of grace, and be finally saved, who are very imperfect. The promise does not secure the salvation of all the children of such as are *merely* Christians. On the other hand, though their salvation cannot be *certainly* inferred from the covenant, in those cases where parents are unfaithful, still as there are degrees in holiness, the parent may be more faithful though he fall far short of his engagements, and God may be more likely to call in his children, than if he had never taken this covenant upon himself. But this question is more summarily and conclusively answered by the Apostle: "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief *make the faith of God without effect?*" *a*

Q. If baptism take the place of circumcision, then will it not follow, that children are members of the Church, and ought to be considered as proper subjects of its discipline?

A. All that we have attempted to prove is that children are now, and were under the former dispensation, *in covenant*

a Rom. iii. 1, 2, 3.

with their parents. There are different opinions it is well known on the question, whether children are members of the Church. We are inclined to think that the affirmative cannot be supported from the Bible. Baptism, as we understand it, is a seal or token of the engagement, into which the believing parent enters with God. The object of this engagement, so far as the child on whom the token is placed is concerned, is that the great Jehovah may be to him a God, and the child become one of his children. In other words, that he may become a Christian. This is what God in great mercy has promised, on condition that the parent is faithful; and we have already shown that although the parent may fall vastly short of being perfect, yet if he make this engagement in faith, and is often led by it to commend his child to God in prayer, his child will be far more likely to become the subject of these blessings, than if no such engagement were made. Now to be a member of the Church, is to be in profession, a Christian. But the object of Baptism is not to *mark or designate the child as being already a Christian*, but to show that his parent believes in God—has entered into covenant with him, to pray for his child and instruct him for God *that he may be* a Christian. If we say that infants are members of the Church, we say that the object for which they are baptized is already accomplished; whereas the nature of the covenant pre-supposes a time of trial, before even if we are faithful, we can expect it. However young a child may be who gives satisfactory evidence of faith in Christ, we do not baptize him if his parent become a believer at the same time, on account of the faith of his parent, but on account of his own. Did we believe that baptism is regeneration, it might be proper to consider baptized children, as professed Christians, and treat them as such; but so long as we view their baptism as pointing forward to their conversion, and as an important

means when viewed in all its connexions, of bringing it about, to treat them as Christians, or as members of the Church, must be manifestly absurd. This view of the subject must show us that Baptism, as it respects our children, is a solemn and important duty. The objection to which these remarks are designed as an answer, has no bearing upon the views which we have stated; still, though children are not made members of the Church by baptism, it is an important means to bring about their conversion and salvation. Can a parent, while it is within his power to do any thing, which he may have good reason to believe, will be instrumental to the salvation of his children, rest contented till it be done? Every parent that has correct views of the covenant, if he sincerely regard the future wellbeing of his children, cannot rest till he has given them up to God, and has the testimony of his own conscience, that he is endeavouring to live according to his engagements.

Q. What is the mode in which Baptism is to be administered?

A. It is believed it never was the design of the Holy Spirit to represent *any* particular mode as essential to Baptism. It is certain that many things about the mode in which other rites are to be performed, are represented as not being essential. The *posture* in which the Lord's Supper is to be received, the *quantity* of *bread* or *wine* to be received, and many other things are of this character. With regard to the question before us, there are but two opinions which claim the attention of the inquirer.

1. *That immersion is essential to baptism,* and

2. *That no particular mode nor any specified quantity of water is necessary to render it valid.*

To show that the first of these opinions cannot be correct, we remark,

1. That there are no instances of Baptism recorded in the

Bible, *in which it might not have been performed by sprinkling, pouring, or effusion.* It is not impossible in the case of Philip and the Eunuch, but that after they both went down into the water, the Eunuch was baptized by pouring. Although some of the circumstances in this, as in many other cases, seem to render it probable, that Baptism was performed by immersion, such as their going down into the water, yet there are circumstances attending all these cases, which apparently militate against that opinion. It is not said in any of these cases, that the subject was put under water, unless it be inferred from the meaning of the word *baptize*, to which we shall attend in its proper place. Neither do we read of any change of raiment, which both convenience and health would have rendered necessary, had Baptism in these cases been performed by immersion.

2. There are many instances recorded, in which it would be difficult if not impossible, to conceive how it could have been done by immersion. Such as the Baptism of the Jailor and his household, who were baptized in the night, without leaving his house. *a* The same remarks are applicable to the Baptisms on the day of pentecost. After all the ingenious inventions, which have been contrived to assist the Apostles, (which by the way we have not a particle of evidence existed at that time) it seems incredible that three thousand should have been baptized by the Apostles in the city of Jerusalem, in one day.

3. The word *baptize*, is sometimes used by the writers of the Bible, *when they could not have meant by it immersion.* The burden of argument, in proof that immersion and that only is Baptism, is derived from the word *baptize.* Without attempting to show the meaning of the word from which the word *baptize* is translated, we shall pursue a different, and it

a Acts xvi. 30—38.

is believed a safer course. If it were true that the literal meaning of the word *baptize* were *immerse*, still it must be proved that it is used in the Bible in its literal sense, before any thing is done toward proving that immersion only is Baptism. The literal meaning of the word that is rendered *spirit*, is *wind;* but the effect must be seen at once, if we were to contend that it is never used in any other sense in the Bible. The important inquiry with us is, what was the meaning affixed to the word *baptize*, by the writers of the Bible? From some circumstances that we have already noticed, it would appear that immersion is essential to the meaning of the word *baptize*, and from others, it would seem impossible that the persons who were baptized, were immersed.

In the seventh chapter of mark, the word is used in circumstances which render it impossible for it to mean immersion. "And when they come from the market, except they wash (except they have baptised themselves) they eat not." From the third verse, it is undeniably evident that the washing, or baptising here mentioned, is simply a washing of the hands. "And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, and brazer vessels, and tables." The word rendered washings, in this passage also, is Baptisms. We can easily conceive how cups and pots in washing may be immersed; but the immersion of tables, especially for that purpose, would be more difficult. And when we remember that the word rendered *tables*, is literally *beds*, it must appear impossible that the word *Baptism* should have been used to mean immersion. The Apostle Paul in giving an account of the ceremonies of the Jewish economy, observes, "Which stood in meats, and drinks, and diverse washings," (or Baptisms.) *a* Now when we look back to these oblations, which the Apostle calls Baptisms,

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a Heb ix. 10.

we can find no one instance in which there is a word used that will answer to the word *immerse*, excepting the word *dip*. But it is to be observed, that this word is used in such a sense in every case, as to place it beyond a doubt, that the thing dipped was not immersed. "And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and *dip* it in the blood that is in the basin." *a* Now it is plain that nothing more than the tops of the hyssop were immersed in the blood, because the only object in dipping it, was that the blood might be *sprinkled*. "As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall *dip* them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water." *b* Here it must be plain to every one that a stick of cedar wood, a branch of hyssop, and a living bird, *could not have been immersed in the blood of a single dead one*. There are six other places among the ritual washings where the word *dip* is used; but in every one of the six, it is plain that immersion could not have been meant.

But with regard to the word *sprinkle* it is used in almost every case of typical cleansing. *c* These are the washings which the Apostle calls Baptism, and if his authority can be relied on, immersion is not essential to Baptism.

2. A few remarks will now be made, with a view to show that the *quantity* of water is not essential, to the validity of this ordinance. It is readily admitted that the word *baptizo*, from which the word *baptize* is translated, means to wash. All those passages in which the cleansing of the spirit is compared to Baptism, are evidence in proof of this. But the question is, by what means is this washing to be performed; *whether by applying the water to the subject, as in every other case, or the subject to the water, as in immersion?*

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a Ex. xii. 22. *b* Lev. xiv. 6. *c* Lev. iv. 6, and Ch. xvii. 6. Num. xix. 18. Lev. vii. 14. Num. xix. 21. Lev. xiv. 7, 51, &c.

It is a fact with the Lord's Supper, that although it is called a supper or a feast, there is no one who believes that an acceptable participation, depends on the *quantity* received. The general course of reasoning on this point is this: If a piece of bread be received not exceeding an inch square, it is sufficient. *It is a perfect representation of eating.* We feel satisfied that every purpose is accomplished, that could be by the reception of a full meal. Why may we not with equal propriety conclude, that when a sufficient quantity of water is applied in Baptism to exhibit *a perfect representation of washing*, the design of the institution is fully accomplished? Is it not a fact that is obvious to the feeblest capacity, that when a small quantity of water is applied to the subject, with a trifling degree of friction, such as is common in every case of cleansing, there is a *representation* of cleansing far more perfect, than when the subject is entirely immersed? Nothing can be more evident from the Bible, than that Baptism among other things, is designed to be a *representation of cleansing.* "That he might sanctify it (that is the Church) having cleansed it with the washing of water by the word." *a* Now what greatly confirms this argument drawn from analogy, is the fact that immersion is not used for cleansing in the whole Bible, whereas the word *sprinkle* is used with this express design, in a great number of instances. *b* The blood of Christ, is called the blood of sprinkling. We have already seen that the various oblations which were attached to the Jewish economy, were performed by sprinkling and effusion. It was doubtless in the application of water by sprinkling, that the children of Israel were baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. *c* What still further corroborates this opinion is the fact, that we are told in prophecy that this is the mode which is to be adopted in those future days of pros-

a Eph. v. 26. *b* Levit. xiv. 7. Num. viii 7. *c* 1 Cor. x. 2

perity which are promised the Church. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean." *a* "So shall he sprinkle many nations." *b* To what *universal* and *religious* ceremony can this allude, which is to be performed by sprinkling? It is thought by some, who would evade the conclusion to which it would naturally lead us, that it refers to some of the washings of the Mosaic ritual. But if we look with candour at the context, we shall be convinced, that this must be a mistake. The prophet refers to a period, when the Jews shall be gathered out of all countries, and brought into their own land; and when they shall be cleansed from all their idols, and shall have a new heart, and a new spirit within them. If there be a promise in the Bible, that would lead us to hope for some glorious displays of divine grace at some future day, this is one. At that time, when the Jews shall come in with the fulness of the Gentiles, it is said that the Jews shall *be sprinkled with clean water.* But we trust enough has been said to show that immersion is not essential to Baptism, but that when water is applied by a proper officer, in the name of the Trinity, every purpose is accomplished for which this rite was designed.

Q. Is not Baptism represented as a burial?

A. The passages to which this question refers, are the following: "Buried with Christ by Baptism into his death," and "Buried with him in Baptism." *c* There is nothing in these passages, as we conceive, that refers to the *mode* of Baptism. The burial alludes to the *effects*, not to the mode. By Baptism, we are in profession, buried from the world, and connected with Christ. As he died, so by our Baptism, we become *professedly* dead to the world, and buried with him. If any one is still tenacious of the opinion, that here is an allusion to the *mode* of Baptism, by which we ought to be govern-

a Ezek. 36, 25. *b* Isa. lii. 15. *c* Rom. vi. 4, and Col. ii 12.

ed in forming our views of that ordinance; what must he think of the verse previous to this passage, as it is found in Collossians? "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." From this passage, is it not plain, that we infer the same truth, that we are professedly dead unto sin; and from ought that appears, we are to be governed as much by one, in our views of duty, as the other?

If it be still thought, that there is something to be learned from this figurative representation, concerning the mode of Baptism, we would only inquire why we may not learn something more clear and convincing on the same subject, from that numerous class of passages, which speak of our being "*Cleansed by sprinkling*," "*Sprinkling of his blood*," "*Sprinkling of clean water*," &c.?

Passages that speak of our being cleansed by sprinkling, are numerous. Are we to learn nothing from them, concerning the *mode* in which that ordinance is to be administered, by which spiritual cleansing is represented?

Q. Was not our Saviour baptized by immersion, and is it not our duty to follow him?

A. That our Saviour was baptized by immersion, is extremely doubtful, for the following reasons: 1. "Jesus being baptized came up *out of* the water." *a* The word *apo*, from which *out of* is translated, is almost uniformly translated *from*.

2. The Saviour was baptized at the same age, when the sons of Levi were inducted into the high priest's office. "From thirty years old and upward, they were numbered to minister at the altar." *b* "Our Saviour, when he began to be about thirty years of age, was baptized." *c* The Apostle

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a Mat. iii. 16 *b* Num iv, 3, 23, 30, 35 *c* Luke iii, 21, 23.

Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, tells us that "Christ did not glorify himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." *a* Here it is asserted that the Father glorified him by making him an high priest, *when* he said "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," which was at his Baptism. To this point is the Saviour's reply to John: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." *b* Now if the Saviour was baptized at the same age as the Jewish high priests, and was made an high priest when he was baptized, and if he himself demanded to be baptized, that he might fulfil all righteousness, what more evidence do we want to satisfy us, that he was baptized after the same manner? They were consecrated to their offices, by being washed with water, while standing in the door of the tabernacle, and by being anointed with oil. This washing was performed by a laver of brass, and of course could be nothing more than the washing of the hands and the face. *c* The Saviour, when he was baptized with water, was anointed with the Holy Spirit. But if it still be believed that our Saviour was immersed, it cannot afford any evidence that in this respect we are to follow him. We have seen that his Baptism was his induction into the high priest's office, and after he had waited till he was thirty years old. *It is also a fact that he could not have been baptized in the name of the Trinity, and that his Baptism and every thing pertaining to it, were under the Jewish dispensation.* In addition to all this, there is no possible command or intimation, that it is our duty; is not the notion that we must follow him in baptism, rather visionary than real? It is unquestionably our duty to follow Christ, but not in those *rites which were attached to the dispensation* under which he lived; but in that vast majority of his

a Heb v, 5 *b* Mat iii, 15 *c* Ex xxix, 4, and xxx, 19

conduct, which had no reference to rites and ceremonies. The spirit which he manifested was ever the same, and in this we are solemnly bound to imitate him.

Q. Was John's Baptism, Christian Baptism?

A. The Baptism administered by John, we cannot consider Christian Baptism, for the following reasons:

1. John's Baptism was a rite *preparatory* to the reception of spiritual blessings. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." *a*

2. John's Baptism was confined to the Jews. "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." *b* But Christian Baptism was to be applied to Gentiles, as well as Jews. "Go ye therefore and *teach all nations*, Baptizing them," &c. *c*

3. We have no account of any precise form, in which John's Baptism was administered; but the form of Christian Baptism, was explicitly given by the Saviour himself.

4. *John's Baptism was preparatory to the introduction of the gospel dispensation, and of course could not belong to it.* "He was sent to prepare the way of the Lord." *d*

5. But the most convincing evidence that Baptism, as administered by John, was not Christian Baptism, is derived from the fact that some who had been baptized by him, were re-baptized by the Apostle Paul. *e*

Great pains have been taken, we are sensible, to prove that the expression "When they heard this," &c. referred to what was done when they were baptized by John. If this interpretation is to be relied on, then it must follow that the Apostle Paul laid his hands upon all that had ever been bap-

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a Mat iii, 11 *b* Mat iii, 5, 6 *c* Mat xxviii, 19 *d* Mat iii, 3 *e* Acts xix, 1—7

tized by John. "When Paul had laid his hands on *them*." This word *them*, certainly refers to those who had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Christian Baptism.—Dwight's Theology.— Peter Edwards.— Clinton.—Prime.

SECTION XVIII.

The Lord's Supper.

Q. What is the design of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is designed to commemorate the sufferings and death of Christ. "This do in remembrance of me." *a*

Q. What are the benefits to be derived from commemorating the sufferings and death of Christ?

A. The benefits to be derived from it are many.

1. It presents to the mind through the medium of the senses, the great sacrifice that has been made for the redemption of men. One moment's reflection upon our own experince, will show us how much more easily and deeply our minds are affected by sensible representations, than by appeals simply so the understanding. We can be told of the slaughter of hundreds and thousands in the field of battle, and our minds will be less affected, than with the sufferings of a single individual, who is before our eyes. In great wisdom and condescension, God has given us an institution, which by a symbolical representation, places the death of Christ, an event which of all others is the most important to us as sinners, in a manner which in point of interest, approaches toward the reality itself. The symbols are simple, and the resemblance is such,

a 1 Cor. xi. 24.

as to convey the mind with the greatest ease, back to the affecting scene, they are designed to represent. We need but little faith to see, through the bread and wine, the body and blood of our Redeemer.

2. This ordinance, has a direct tendency to strengthen our faith. It will be recollected that one important evidence of the truth of divine revelation, was drawn from a view of this institution. It is represented as having been instituted by the Saviour himself. It is abundantly attested by the Apostles, that it was observed by them, and it is equally evident by the writings of all the friends of christianity, that it has been invariably observed, from that time to the present. Further, we see not how it is possible for this institution to have been introduced, at any period after the death and resurrection of Christ. Those to whom upon this supposition it must have been first proposed, would have seen that the Apostles and primitive Christians had not obeyed the positive commands of their Lord, and of course that they did neither believe him to be divine, nor that he had risen from the dead. But it is still more absurd to suppose that the institution was established by the Saviour, and observed by the Apostles, (which we have shown must have been the case) unless the events which it is designed to commemorate, were facts. *The Apostles were in circumstances in which they could not have been deceived.* They must have known whether the Saviour had wrought miracles, died and risen again from the dead. We may then look upon this institution as a standing monument, erected and guarded by the providence of God, to bear unequivocal testimony to the death and resurrection of our Saviour, down to the end of time. "As often (says the Apostle) as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." *a*

a 1 Cor xi, 26

3. By the observance of this rite, some of the most important doctrines in the whole system of our faith, are frequently and deeply impressed on the mind. It has been observed that sensible representations, more deeply affect the mind, than mere abstract appeals to the understanding. This is true not only of our Saviour's death, but of some of the important doctrines of the gospel. The *guilt of sin* is here exhibited in the most striking and impressive manner. *It is the testimony of God*, that nothing less than the blood of his Son, could make an atonement for it. We are taught by this institution with equal clearness *the necessity* of an atonement. The holiness of God's law, and his determination to support it, together with the infinite love of God towards mankind, &c. We are taught from this institution something of the *nature* of the atonement; at least we are taught, that something more is meant by it, than merely the example of Christ. We can scarcely conceive why we should be required to bring the Saviour so often to mind, and that by a ceremony which refers us directly to his death, if it is barely his *example, in the various circumstances in life*, from which we are to derive advantage.

Q. With what temper of mind should we approach the table of our Lord?

A. 1. With a spirit of *penitence*. How can we but be penitent, when we have before us the most conclusive evidence of our guilt? Every Christian, it must be believed, has become so far acquainted with his own heart, as to know that it is deceitful. He will of course be far more willing, to place implicit confidence in the testimony of God concerning his own character, than in his own reasoning, unaided by revelation. As he cannot believe that God would send his Son to die for sin, unless it were the only way by which pardon could be offered, and the character of God supported, he must feel that he has before him the most convincing evidence

of the exceeding heinousness of sin, that can be placed before the mind.

2. We are to attend this ordinance with *meekness and humility*. That view of our guilt with which we are furnished by this ordinance, can scarcely fail of leading us to feel, as well as see, our unworthiness. The direct tendency of this feeling, will be to produce meekness and humility. The same effects may be expected from that comparison of our characters with that of the Saviour's, to which a view of the symbols of his body and blood, naturally invite us.

3. We should approach the Supper of our Lord with lively emotions of *gratitude*. We have before us a sensible representation, of the unbounded love of Christ. And when we remember that the sufferings and death to which this ceremony refers us, were endured for *us*—for beings, who are at an infinite remove from having any claim, on the footing of justice, to his interference; surely if we can remain ungrateful, we must conclude that we are unprepared, for this spiritual and holy entertainment. In the sufferings and death of Christ, we see the eternal Jehovah bringing himself down, by a mysterious connexion with our natures, to our circumstances and to our apprehensions; we see the price that he has paid for our hopes, concerning what we now are, and what we expect to enjoy, during the eternal ages to come.

4. It is important to come to this ordinance with *faith*. Without faith, this whole representation will be an uninteresting ceremony. Faith will enable us to look beyond the symbols, and see the character, and the transactions, which they are designed to present before the mind.

5. When we come to the table of the Lord, we should possess a *spirit of forgiveness* toward our enemies. Can we look at the pains which he has taken, that he might offer pardon and forgiveness to us, and then contrast the unreasonableness of our enmity to him with the love which is manifest-

ed to us, and not be convinced that without a disposition to forgive, we have not a spirit like his?

6. Lastly, we should approach the table of the Lord with *prayer* and *self-examination*. We should pray that we might not deceive ourselves in the inquiry, whether we possess the views and feelings which have been mentioned, and that we might not overlook the important truths, the scene is designed to exhibit. If we ever need the influence of the Holy Spirit to direct our meditations, it is when Jesus Christ is set forth crucified before us.

Q. What are we to understand by the expression of the Apostle, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body?"

A. From the scope of the Apostle's argument, as well as from the opinion of the best commentators on this passage, we are led to believe that those fears and scruples of conscience, which this text has excited, have their foundation in the seeming "harshness of our translation," rather than in the spirit of the passage. The passage may be literally rendered, He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment or condemnation to himself. We may observe that it is the *manner in which* we eat, rather than the *character with which* we eat, that exposes us to condemnation. The threatening cannot with propriety, be applied to such as *feel* themselves unworthy; for this is a feeling which is essential to an acceptable participation. It doubtless refers to the habit of making the Lord's Supper a pompous and carnal feast, not discerning the Lord's body. By this habit, either from a miraculous display of holy disapprobation, or its natural tendency, some had brought upon themselves diseases or judgments, which had proved the occasion of their death. Such then as profess to entertain a hope in Christ,

and yet dare not own him before men, and come to this solemn ordinance, can receive no countenance from this passage. Did they feel themselves *worthy*, they would come on the strength of their own righteousness, and would then be guilty of the very conduct, against which the threatening is pointed.

Q. Who are the proper subjects to be admitted to this ordinance?

A. It must be apparent from the remarks already made, that none but such as have prevailing evidence in their own minds and in the minds of the Church that they are born again, have a right to this ordinance. It follows also by unavoidable consequence from the exhortation of the Apostle, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread," &c. Does not the Saviour describe the hypocrisy and impiety of such as partake of this ordinance and remain in impenitence, in that memorable declaration, "We have eaten and drunken in thy presence?" *a*

Q. What evidence have we, that this ordinance was designed to be perpetual, and that it is still obligatory upon the disciples of Christ?

A. There is no institution in the Christian Church, for the perpetuity of which, we have plainer and more unequivocal authority.

1. It must be plain that the object at which we are to aim in attending this ordinance, must afford a powerful reason for its continuance. "This do in remembrance of me." *b* Is it not plain beyond a question, that this institution was designed for the use of the Church, *after the departure of our Lord.* So far as it should be observed with this view, it would be more important to such as should live centuries after he left the world, than to his own disciples. We stand in more need at this distance of time, for some standing testimo-

a Luke xiii, 26 *b* Luke xxii, 19

ny that our Lord has suffered in the flesh, that shall at the same time, while it proves the truth of our religion, bring fresh to our remembrance the blessed Saviour, than did the Apostles.

2. The Apostle Paul was uncommonly definite in stating the time, that this institution should continue. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, *ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*" To suppose as some do, that the time referred to by the Apostle when the *Lord should come*, was that, when he should by his Spirit illuminate the minds of his disciples, and take them away from all ordinances, is to adopt a principle of interpretation so loose, as would put it forever out of our power to prove any point by the Bible. For,

3dly, The Apostles themselves, as appears from their own writings, continued in the observance of this ordinance to the close of their lives, and then enjoined it upon their successors. We have no account of any of the primitive Churches, but what observed it. This supposed coming of Christ, and illumination of mind, was something which the Apostles never enjoyed. Besides, when was the Spirit ever shed down upon men in a manner more powerful, than on the day of pentecost? And it should be remembered that the Apostle definitely and solemnly gave this institution in charge to the Corinthian church, almost thirty years after that period.

Q. What are the Scriptural grounds, for Christian fellowship in the reception of this ordinance?

A. There is such a variety of opinions on this question, as must render every attempt to give a decisive answer, extremely delicate.

1. It is necessary that every individual, whom we would admit to our communion, should have attended to the initiating ceremonies by which, according to his own conscientious belief, he becomes a member in full standing of some regular Christian Church. It is unnecessary in order to settle the

question before us, so far as duty is affected by it, to determine whether there might not be circumstances supposed, in which this would not be indispensable; because at the present day, and in this age of the world, there can be nothing to hinder any one from complying with it, if it be sincerely desired. But as there are communities which bear the appellation of Christian Churches, to whom persons may be admitted, who totally discredit the existence of vital piety, or a change of heart; we cannot suppose that every *profsssor* of the religion of Jesus Christ, can be admitted by Christians to their fellowship.

The question then returns, on what grounds can we consistently, admit others to our communion?

It is believed that the most correct rule, for a general one, that can be given, in answer to this question is, *prevailing evidence of a new heart.* We have said that this is a general rule, and it must be admitted as such, because there may be evidence of this kind in the character of individuals, by whom, in consequence of erroneous instruction, sentiments the most pernicious and dangerous, are cherished. Sentiments that exert a deadly influence on society, or the progress of religion, such as a denial of the Christian Sabbath, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, &c. cannot consistently, by such as have the cause of Christ at heart, either directly or indirectly, be countenanced. With exceptions like these, we shall now offer a few arguments in support of the rule above mentioned, as the only Scriptural rule, for the extent of our fellowship: and,

1. It was upon this principle that the Apostles received each other as brethren, and labourers together, in the vineyard of Christ. "And when James, Cephas, and John, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave unto me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship." If upon this

ground they were admitted to the important work of the *ministry*, no one will suppose that it would not be safe, and consistent, to admit upon the same, to the communion table.

2. This seems to have been the ground, upon which the Saviour directed his disciples to receive and treat their brethren. When some of the disciples came to our Lord and told him, that they saw some casting out devils, and forbid them, because they *followed not with them*, the direction of our Saviour was, "Forbid them not: he that is not for me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Must not the disciples have understood from this direction, that it was their duty to fellowship and encourage every individual that was engaged in the service of the Lord?

3. The directions of the Apostles to the Churches under their care, seem to have been given upon this principle. If they directed the Churches to cut off any of their members, it was because their conduct was unchristian. *a*

4. The Apostle Paul directed his brethren at Rome to receive *one another as Christ had received them.* How can we comply with the spirit of this direction, unless we admit to our fellowship all such as are the friends of Christ? Further, is it not true that all our hopes of pardon and everlasting salvation, are suspended upon this principle, that he has loved us and received us, over many errours and imperfections?

5. If we make the rule for the extent of our fellowship any thing else—correctness of sentiment, or regularity of conduct, will it not be impossible to determine in either case, where to draw the line? Men have different views of the importance of different sentiments, and different practices.

6. May not the declarations of the Saviour on the subject

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a 2 Cor. vi. 14—17 Eph. v. 11.

of charity, or the giving of alms, be equally applicable to the subject before us? "*In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*"

Dwight's Theology.—Hopkins' System.—Lathrop on Ephesians.

SECTION XIX.

Christian Church.

Q. What is a Church?

A. The original signification of the word *church* was an *assembly* collected together for any purposes whatever. *a* It is used at the present day, to mean,

1. All the professed believers in Christ, over the whole earth. This is called the *visible Church. b*

2. The word is sometimes used to mean all *real Christians*, both in heaven and on earth. This is called the *invisible* Church.

3. These are sometimes divided, and all real believers on earth, are called the *Church militant;* and all that are in heaven, the *Church triumphant. c* Professed believers are sometimes divided, and each division is called a *Church.* Thus the American Church, the Greek Church, the Presbyterian Church, &c. are phrases that are often heard. But the word is sometimes used to mean a voluntary association of professed believers, for the purpose of enjoying the institutions and privileges of the gospel.

Q. What are the proper officers of a Church?

A. Pastors and deacons. Perhaps there is no question that can be suggested, that has occasioned more contention than this. It cannot be expected that a subject as extensive

a Acts xix. 32. *b* Eph. iii. 21. *c* Heb. xii. 23.

as this has at length become, can be thoroughly investigated here, consistently with the limits of this work. Nothing more will be attempted than to adduce a few of the most decided arguments in proof of the answer we have now given.

1. There is but one class of teaching or instructing officers who have ever received by divine authority, any regular commission. It certainly would seem that every distinct order or class of officers, would be distinctly commissioned. What evidence can we have that *any* orders have ever been appointed by the great Head of the Church, unless their duties have been described, or in other words, unless they have received a definite commission? And if more than one order have been appointed, have we not a right to expect that we shall find with equal clearness their different commissions? The commission which was given by our Saviour to the first of these classes, is contained in the following words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." *a* How natural is this introduction when about to give a commission which was to remain in full force to the end of time!—one which is of vital importance to the existence and prosperity of his cause, and which never could have been given only by the great Head of the Church. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the world. Amen." *b* This is the commission that is given to pastors or teachers; and not an intimation, it may be stated with confidence, can be found in the history of the Saviour or his Apostles, of a distinct commission to a higher order of men. It has no bearing against the truth of this statement, that the Apostles at some times exercised an authority superior to the other pastors. The

a Mat. xxviii. 18. *b* Mat xxviii. 19, 20,

Apostles were endowed with powers to work miracles; but their powers were not given in the commission, and the commission was to remain in force "to the end of the world." It will not be plead for any order of men that have existed since the days of the Apostles, that they are in the possession of these extraordinary gifts; consequently if there be a class of teachers, which are superior in authority to others, such superiority must be seen in their commission. But that any thing of this character has been discovered in the commission, to which every teacher must go for his authority, is what it is believed has never been pretended. This commission gave authority to preach, and to baptize, and as all other duties are essential to fulfil the design of the gospel, they are included by implication. From any thing that we can discover, every man that has a right to teach, has the same right to baptize; and all who have a right to do both, in point of authority stand upon a level. The appointment of the other classes of officers which we have named, is given with the same clearness and decision. The account is contained in the sixth chapter of Acts.

2. The different names which are given to the first of these classes, are used in the Scriptures in a manner that cannot fail to convince every unbiassed and inquiring mind, that they refer to the same office. If there be an appellation in the whole New Testament, that intimates a superiority in office among those who are appointed to teach, it is that of *Bishop*. But this word is undeniably used in many places as synonymous with *Elder* and *Presbyter*. The Apostle Peter observes, "The Elders which are among you I exhort who am also an Elder." He then proceeds to describe their duty—"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." [a] From this passage it is plain that the Apos-

[a] 1 Pet. v. 1—3.

ile Peter considered himself as having no more authority than an Elder. As an Elder he exhorted his brethren. Whereas, had he sustained an office of superior authority by virtue of his commission, there could not have been a fairer opportunity for him to have improved it. What goes still further to confirm this opinion is, that his direction in this passage to the Elders which is translated *to take the oversight of*, in the Greek, means to oversee or exercise the office of a Bishop. Again, the Apostle Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the *Elders* of the Church. In the charge which he gave to the Elders, he directed them to "Take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers." *a* The word *overseer* has the same meaning as that of *Bishop;* it is the only word from which that of *Bishop* is translated in the New Testament. It is plain from this passage, that these *Elders* were *Bishops*, and were made Bishops by the Holy Ghost.

3. From this passage and from some others, it is evident that some single Churches, had a plurality of Bishops *b* Where a Church is large, a plurality of Pastors or Elders is common; but no instance it is presumed ever occurred, where there was a plurality of Bishops in the modern sense of the word.

4. It is evident that Bishops are no more than Pastors or Presbyters, from the characters they are required to sustain and the duties they are to perform. "And we beseech you brethren to know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord." It must be evident at first sight that this would be impossible according to the meaning which many affix at the present day to the word *Bishop*. The Apostle Paul observes to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting,

a Acts xx 17, 18. *b* Phil i, 1.

and ordain *Elders* in every city as I had appointed thee." "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a Bishop must be blameless as the steward of God." *a* Here the reason which the Apostle assigns, why Titus should ordain such persons for Elders as are blameless is, that a Bishop must be blameless. This must certainly appear unmeaning if he did not design to be understood as referring to the same office, by these two names.

Again, "A Bishop must be one who ruleth well his own house." *b* "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." *c* From these passages we see that Bishops and Elders both perform the same duty, and of course they are viewed by the Apostles as sustaining the same office. On the whole, it may be stated with confidence, that the opinion that there is in the Church an order of men superior to Elders and Presbyters, never was taken from the Bible. That this is not an uncharitable statement, is evident from the fact that it has been acknowledged, by some of the most able advocates of that sentiment. The Editors of the *Christian Observer*, frankly acknowledge that "Episcopalians found not the merits of their cause upon any express injunction, or delineation of Ecclesiastical government in the Scriptures; for there is none." But if it be not found in the Scriptures, it certainly ought not to be in our creeds; and it is most likely it never would have been, had it not been for that spirit that "loveth to have the pre-eminence."

Q. Is it not evident that Timothy was Bishop, in the modern sense of the word, of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete?

A. It is difficult to determine from what this opinion arose. The following considerations seem however, sufficient to show that it is entirely unfounded.

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a Titus i, 7. *b* 1 Tim. iii 2. *c* 1 Tim. v. 17.

1. With regard to Timothy, it was certain that in the latter part of his second Epistle, the Apostle Paul directed him to do the work of an *Evangelist*. It is plain that he could not have been a Diocesan Bishop and an Evangelist, or an itinerant preacher, at the same time.

2. Timothy and Titus were both inspired men, and like the rest of the Apostles, were possessed of extraordinary authority. They were never settled in either of the places, where it is supposed by many that they were Bishops; but resided in them for a short season, and then at the command of the Apostle, returned to him again. The Apostle addresses Timothy in the following language: "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went unto Macedonia." *a But did the Apostle beseech him to stay among the people of his own charge?* Must not this have been strange language, if Timothy were at this time Bishop of Ephesus? The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church as follows: "If Timotheus come, see that he may be without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do: Let no man despise him." Does not this text clearly imply, that Timothy had as really a charge at Corinth, as at Ephesus? and as he resided sometimes at this place, and at Phillippi, have we not as good reason to believe that he was Bishop at these places, as at Ephesus?

3. When the Apostle sent from Miletus, for the Elders at Ephesus, we hear nothing concerning Timothy; and as there was a plurality of Bishops who belonged to Ephesus at that time, *Timothy could not have been their Diocesan Bishop.* As a proof that Titus only resided at Crete for a season, he is directed at the close of the Epistle sent to him, to come to the Apostle at Nicopolis. *b* Dr. Whitby, who is not wanting for his attachment to Episcopacy, confesses he "Can find

a 1 Tim. i. 3. *b* Titus iii. 12.

nothing in any writer of the first three centuries, concerning the Episcopate of Timothy and Titus, nor any intimation that they bore that name." Dr. Scott, in his preface to the Epistle of Paul to Titus, declares, that he "was not convinced, but that the title of *Arch Bishop*, would have been a derogation to the real dignity of Titus, as an Evangelist." He also labours to prove, as any one may see by looking at his comments on Acts xx. 28, 1 Tim. iii. 1, that the term *Bishop* was understood by the Apostle to mean the same as *Presbyter* or *Pastor*.

Q. Is there not evidence that the primitive Church had more than one order of teaching officers, from the testimony of the fathers?

A. On this question we have room only to remark, that on this subject it is unsafe placing any reliance on this kind of testimony. It must be acknowledged by every one, by whom it is candidly examined, to be so contradictory, as to destroy itself. It would be very easy to fill up whole pages, taken from the best authority among the fathers, most decisively in proof that Episcopacy never existed till some time after the death of the Apostles. The following extracts must suffice.

Clement, of Rome, says that "the Apostles constituted Bishops and Deacons." Jerome declares "that a Presbyter is the same as Bishop, and that originally the Church was governed by the joint counsel of the Presbyters." Again, "among the ancients, Presbyters and Bishops were the same." Tertullian says that in the affairs of the Church, "Certain approved Elders preside." Irenæus observes, "It behoves us to hearken to those who are Presbyters in the Church," who as we have shown, have their succession from the Apostles. St. Hilary remarks, "The Presbyters were at first called Bishops." These extracts are sufficient to show that

if the testimony of the fathers is to be relied on, the primitive Church considered Bishops, Pastors, and Elders, as sustaining the same office.

Q. What are the duties assigned to Deacons?

A. To oversee and adjust the temporal concerns of the Church. "There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." *a* The duties of this office then, in the days of the Apostles, might be performed by such as did not labour in word and doctrine, and of course, such as held no other office, had no right to preach. If it should be alleged that some of these Deacons were afterwards employed in preaching, still, until it could be proved that they had received no additional licence, or authority, nothing would be done to invalidate the statement we have made. From their commission, it is plain that they were to look to the wants of the poor, to see that regular measures should be adopted, to collect the charities of the Church, and convey them to the proper objects. In this way, and in many others, they might do much toward relieving their Pastors from that burden of care and anxiety, which otherwise would press upon them, and prevent their usefulness in the ministration of the word.

Q. How are Deacons to be inducted into their office?

A. By the choice of the Church, and by receiving ordination at the hands of the Pastors. "Then the twelve collected the multitude of the disciples and said, Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." When the requisite number had been chosen, they

a Acts vi. 12.

were set before the Apostles, and "When the Apostles had prayed, they laid ther hands on them." It is to be regretted that a duty so important, and so plainly described in the Bible, should have been so generally neglected. Every measure that would tend to impress the mind of a Deacon with the solemnity and importance of his office, ought to be adopted; and that ordination would produce this effect, cannot seriously be doubted. We have no account in the Bible of any other way; by which they may be admitted to their office, than by ordination; and it would doubtless be well for the interests of the Church, if this ancient direction were universally obeyed.

Q. What are the objects of Church discipline?

A. The recovery of such as have injured by their conduct the cause of Christ, or apostatized from the faith; and a reparation of the injury which they have occasioned. The Church at Corinth was directed by the Apostle, to deliver the incestuous person unto "Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." *a* In the directions which were given by the Saviour on this subject, it is said, "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." *b* It is obvious from this, that one important object to be accomplished by the discipline of the Church, is the amendment of the transgressor. It is also important on account of the bearing it has on the honour of religion, that the discipline of the Church should not be neglected. In what other way can faithful and conscientious believers, show that they disapprove of the conduct of faithless and impious apostates? And does not the honour of religion require such a disapprobation, from every sincere and honest Christian? If we visit the house of a neighbour, and hear from some members of the family profane or obscene lan-

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a 1 Cor. v. 5. b Mat. xviii. 15.

guage, and no disapprobation is manifested by the rest, have we not a right to conclude that such conduct is approved by the family? The application of this remark to the point before us, must be perfectly plain. For what purpose if not to manifest a proper disapprobation, and in this way repair the injury done to religion, are we required to let the irreclaimable be to us as heathen?

Q. What is the proper course to be pursued in the discipline of the Church?

A. The most prudent and most successful course, from the testimony of near two thousand years experiment, is that which is described with so much particularity in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Whether from the letter of this rule it could be inferred that it is sacredly obligatory in all cases, has been doubted by many; still when we reflect on the importance of having some rule that is generally admitted to be such, and the tendency and discretion which are apparent in this; no individual who wishes to promote the peace and prosperity of the Church, would ever insinuate but that it may be considered a rule of universal application. No course could be suggested that would give the complainant and the Church on the one hand, a fairer opportunity to manifest the sincerity of their motives in the discipline; and the delinquent on the other, in examining and re-examining himself, and the charges that are brought against him. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Every open violation of Christian duty will be felt by every real Christian, as a trespass against himself. With feelings of this character he would be prepared to commence the prosecution. He would then have an opportunity to bring into exercise all the warmth and anxiety of his heart. More depends on the manner in which this duty is performed, in order to be successful, than could be conjectured from mere speculation. If a bro-

ther professedly attempt to reclaim an offender, when every circumstance and every appearance indicate that he is prompted by a spirit of revenge, we need but little knowledge of human nature to know, that however guilty the offender may be, all that is done in this way to reclaim him, will be worse than useless. But if the offender can discern a spirit of tenderness, and an evident feeling of regard for his good in all that is done, both by the complainant and the Church, his heart must be as destitute of Christian feeling as marble, not to be reclaimed. It is doubtful whether an attempt to reclaim a real Christian, how far soever he may have wandered from the path of his duty, can be made with a Christian spirit, without being successful. Where Churches are large, if they are faithful they will be frequently called to this duty; and although there are few or no Churches but what are too neglectful, yet such is the imperfection of our natures, where cases of discipline are frequent, there is great danger of imbibing a spirit very similar to a spirit of litigation. This consequence of the depravity of our natures, does not lessen our obligation to be faithful, neither ought we to be disheartened by it; but it should lead us to be more on our guard and be more careful and prayerful in the examination of ourselves. In this way the most affecting cases of discipline, have had a salutary tendency upon the whole Church. Instances have frequently occurred, where Churches could date the commencement of a general and powerful revival of religion, to a case of discipline.

Q. Ought the Church to insist on publick confessions, in cases where the misconduct of the offenders has become publick?

A. There are many things in the discipline of the Church, as well as in other parts of Ecclesiastical economy, in which we must be governed by discretion, or by a reference to authority that is plainly inferential. If one point to which we

have already attended be granted, the affirmative of this question must follow of course. If one object to be secured in the discipline of an offender, be a reparation of the injury he has done to religion, it will follow that this reparation ought to be as extensive as the injury. How can a Christian feel that he has done all in his power, to repair the injury he has done to the cause of Christ, till he has done it; till he has met the evil report he has occasioned, with a confession as publick as the report itself?

2. To insist on a publick confession in such cases, gives us an additional opportunity to test the sincerity of one, who is professedly penitent. It will doubtless be acknowledged that it is our duty to forgive, when we can obtain evidence of repentance; and that in every case we ought to obtain the best evidence in our power. If it be doubtful whether the offender be penitent, we ought to take the best measures to obtain evidence, to which we can have access. It is well known that a publick confession is in almost every case, a severe trial. It must be evident to every reflecting mind, that multitudes who have deeply wounded the cause of Christ, would be more likely to do every thing else that a Church might require *without real penitence*, than they would to do every thing that is required, and make a publick confession *in addition*.

3. It must be obvious also that as far as it is considered a trial and a cross, the practice of requiring it, has a tendency to diminish the commission of sin. We may easily conceive that in cases where the mind by temptation, and inducements to oppose temptation, is brought to a balance, the addition of this inducement may decide in favour of duty, and thus prevent apostacy. There are extremes to this subject, as well as to every other. While on the one hand, we may readily see that without some test of sincerity, we could not

determine when to forgive;—so on the other, that test might be of so severe and trying a character, as to approach toward the penitential systems of the dark ages. So far as a subject of this kind can be decided by experiment, it is believed that it may be stated with confidence, that the question under consideration must be decided in the affirmative. While various and important advantages have resulted from the practice of requiring publick confessions, it is doubtful whether it has ever occasioned any thing, that might be called an evil. It may have wounded the modesty of some virtuous individuals, but it is doubtful whether it has not in these cases, created a greater disgust toward the vices which occasioned them.

Q. Have we any Scripture authority for Ecclesiastical councils; or for a reference of difficult questions about which there are divisions in the Church, to the advice and decision of able and experienced men?

A. The council which was occasioned by the contention at Antioch on the subject of circumcision, an account of which is found in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, must remain as authority sufficient to justify this practice. Besides, it is a practice which if we consult experience or analogy, the most conscientious policy would be ready to admit. The importance of having difficult and perplexing cases referred to those who are not only better informed, but have no party feelings or interests, must be apparent. The propriety of having laymen united with Pastors in these references, is also by the instances cited above, undeniably established.

Q. Have we any evidence that the primitive Church contained such a class of officers as are usually called *ruling Elders?*

A. We are constrained to believe that many things, with regard to the constitution of the Church, as well as its discipline, are left for the exercise of a sound and conscientious

discretion, in view of its existing circumstances. That the circumstances of the Church at that period in which the Apostles lived, called for a class of officers which have not been needed, and have not existed since, will not be doubted. With regard to the question before us, we are constrained to acknowledge that we are not as well satisfied as we could wish. To us the Scriptures do not seem to speak with as much clearness and decision on this subject, as on most others. We shall only present a brief abstract (for we have room for nothing more) of the evidence on both sides as it appears to us; and leave the reader to decide for himself. There are many passages of Scripture which seem at least from an honest reading, to prove that no such board of authority did exist, in the primitive Church. Of this character are the following: "Tell it to the Church." *a* "Now we command you brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." *b* Of this character are all the directions of the Apostle Paul to the different Churches. The directions which are given throughout his Epistles, seem to be to Churches, and not to any board of officers. It may also be observed, that from these directions it may be inferred, that every Church was to accomplish its own discipline, within itself. This however might be done, and the board of officers in question, might have existed in the Church.

In answer to the above arguments, it is generally stated that the word *Church*, was used frequently under the former dispensation, to mean the Elders, who sustained the government of the Church. Such as were appointed for the assistance of Moses, at the suggestion of his father-in-law. That it was the Church existing under the Jewish form, to which our Saviour referred in the passage above mentioned, there

a Mat. xviii. 17. *b* 2 Thess iii 6

can be no doubt. In reference to the manner of the Apostle, in giving his directions to the Church, rather than to its officers, it is said that the customs of the day, were in conformity to what has now been stated concerning the Jewish form of the Church, and perfectly similar to those which exist at the present. If a prosecution be commenced against a town, or state, or society; the town or state, &c. is considered in point of authority, as existing in its officers. The prosecution is commenced invariably against them. It is thought that the direction of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, is a plain and powerful confirmation of this opinion. "Let the Elders that *rule well*, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." *a* It seems to be very plainly intimated in this passage, that there was a class of Elders who exercised authority in the Church, who did not teach. The same sentiment is thought to be plainly exhibited, where the Apostle, in describing the various gifts in the Church, *mentions in addition to teachers, helps, and governments. b* As considerations showing the *expediency* of having such a board of authority in the Church, the following things are suggested.

1. It would greatly relieve the Pastor of the burden of his labours, and allow him to give himself more wholly to the important work of instruction.

2. It would release him from that labour, in which he is most likely, if he be ever so faithful and cautious, to injure his influence and prevent his usefulness.

3. It would produce a board, far more able and impartial for the investigation of difficult cases; as the members of Churches in general, feeling no peculiar responsibility, are too apt to depend on the opinion of a few. In this point of view it would seem as important, that the government of the

a 1 Tim. v. 17. *b* 1 Cor xii. 20.

Church should be committed to a select number, who should feel the responsibility attached to their decisions, as that criminal causes should be tried in our Courts by a Jury, rather than by a promiscuous assembly.

4. It would greatly and justly limit the power and influence of the Pastor. It is not possible for him to have that influence with a set of men, who feel it to be their duty to examine and understand for themselves, as with the common class of Church members, who had none of that feeling of responsibility.

5. Difficult cases would be not only more ably examined and justly decided, but their decision would not be so likely to produce that *party influence*, which is so often a sore and grievous evil in our Churches. There would not be that temptation to endeavour to influence the common members of the Church, that we now too often witness.

On the whole, whether such a class of officers existed in the primitive Church, or whether it be expedient that there should be at the present day, we do not take it upon us to decide. We are confident however, viewing the nature of the arguments on both sides, the uncertainty that seems to rest upon the subject, and its *comparative* unimportance, that no individual with the feelings and views of a Christian, will choose rather to dissent, or attempt to disturb the peace of a Church, than to cheerfully countenance and support either.

SECTION XX.

Call to Preach.

Q. How can we determine when men *are called of God*, to preach the gospel?

A. Before we proceed to answer directly this question, we would remark that this is a subject, to which the attention of mankind is rarely called. The reason of this it is difficult to conceive. It certainly cannot be because the subject is not to persons in every circumstance in life, sufficiently important to demand their attention. It is doubtless said by some, "What interest have we, to know what is a call of God, to preach the gospel? It is our duty to hear the gospel when it is preached. Let those who think it to be theirs to preach, determine this question." This every man will see on a moment's reflection, is a view of the subject which is extremely erroneous. Unless there are men at the present day, who pretend to be the ministers of Christ and to preach his gospel, who deceive both themselves and their hearers; the state of society has greatly reformed, and men are not as depraved as they were in the days of the Saviour. Could we consistently sit under the preaching of such men, if we knew them to be of this character? Should we be willing to send our children to a teacher, whatever might be his professions, when once we had become convinced that his instructions in every branch of science only mislead them? But what would be endangered in that case, compared with what is endangered by the exhibition of false and erroneous views of the gospel? Suppose an individual should make his appearance among us, who should avow himself to be some important agent of the government. Suppose he should affirm that the government had required, that a certain portion of our time, should be employed in a manner no way conducive to our interest, but entirely in its own service. Should we feel no interest in the inquiry, whether his pretensions were according to fact? Yet how trifling would be the interest we should have at stake in that case, compared with that which is involved in the inquiry, Who among those that pretend to be the preachers of the gospel, are commissioned by the Saviour to that important

work? To set the importance of this inquiry in a still clearer point of light, suppose the sentence of death were passed upon us for some capital crime, and we were lodged in prison waiting the time of our execution. During our confinement, various individuals are admitted to our apartment, who affirm that they have come to make propositions on the part of government, and to offer terms, on which we may be pardoned. Should we not have some interest in the question, whether they were honest men, or impostors? Suppose after some one had stated the conditions on which he affirmed that we might have pardon, and after we had complied with them, it should prove that he never had been sent by the government. Suppose further that we depend on his representations, and as we imagine comply with the condition of pardon, as stated by the government. With these impressions, and with the expectation that when we are brought on to the scaffold we shall be pardoned, we remain till the fatal hour arrives, and we then learn that this was only an impostor, and that he had never received any commission or agency from the government. Suppose it should be stated before the assembled multitude, that there had been provisions made for us to receive pardon on the most reasonable terms, and faithful men had been intrusted with a commission to that amount, but that we did not like their terms, as well as those that were stated by the impostor: They were too humiliating; and therefore although they carried with them the most unequivocal credentials of their being sent by the government, their message was wholly rejected. Should we not in those circumstances, be inclined to reflect upon ourselves, for neglecting to examine the credentials of these different men? Now it will be seen that this representation, does no more towards exhibiting this subject in a just point of light, than temporal things will compare with eternal. If the present life be our only *accepted time and day of salvation*, and if

we listen to such teachers as are not sent of God, and do not give a correct account of the terms of life, how vain is the attempt to form any just conception of the consequences! The question then before us, how shall we determine when ministers are commissioned and sent by the great Head of the Church, is one that it becomes every individual to settle for himself. The view we have given of this subject must in the opinion of every reflecting mind, be seen to correspond with the account which is contained in the Scriptures. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." *a* This was spoken with reference to the teaching of the Pharisees; and of course no meaning can be affixed to it, only that which we have exhibited. If some teach falsehood for truth, and others believe them and act according to their instruction, both shall fail of salvation. What are we to understand by the characters which are mentioned by our Saviour, such as the following: "*blind guides, wolves in sheep's clothing, men that neither go in themselves, nor suffer those who are entering to go in?*" What can be the meaning of these declarations, unless there are some who mislead others, in the great affair of salvation?

That such as preach the gospel in its purity, are in some sense *called of God*, there can be no doubt. "No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron." *b* The way is now prepared to enter upon the answer to the question, What is it to be called of God to preach the gospel? It will be our object to examine in the first place some things which are often considered evidences of a divine call which are not; and secondly, mention some things which are *real* evidences. On this subject men have been fond of extremes.

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a Mat. xv: 14. *b* Heb v. 4.

1. It is thought by some, that the call of God is made up entirely of human qualifications.

A passage we have already cited is direct in proof, that all the real ministers of Christ are called of God. The expression "*No man* taketh this honour unto himself," &c. very plainly implies that the *call* mentioned in the passage, was not peculiar to the Apostolic age. That a call of God to preach the gospel, is made up entirely of human qualifications, is a sentiment which has had a fair opportunity to exhibit its spontaneous and legitimate effects upon the Church. So far as it is safe inferring the nature of causes from their effects, so far we are justified in saying, that the frosts of December, could not be more deadly in their influence on the vegetation of May, than this doctrine has been to the interests of vital piety. Let a man have all the human qualifications that the world can bestow upon him, or that his mind may be capable of receiving, still he might be a total stranger to that necessity which lay so heavy upon the Apostle, and led him to exclaim, "Yea woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." *a* Whoever enters the field of the gospel with no other than human qualifications, might if he were not deaf to the voice of Jehovah, hear himself continually rebuked by "*What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?*" *b*

2. It is thought by some that a *call of God* is wholly supernatural, or miraculous, and has nothing to do with human qualifications. It is not possible while we are in this world to determine whether this sentiment or the one we have already examined, exerts the most pernicous influence on the interests of religion. We are constrained to believe that the advocates of this opinion, do not see the bearing it has on the character of the Holy Spirit; neither is it seen by the multitude who flock to hear the men that claim to be thus highly

a 1 Cor. ix. 16. *b* Ps. l. 16.

distinguished of God. This may be thought to be an uncharitable remark, but it will be seen on a careful examination, to be the most charitable that the nature of the case can allow. This statement will be seen to be supported beyond a doubt by the following facts, which are by no means uncommon.

1. Some men who pretend to have this call, and who boldly declare that they are directed entirely by the immediate agency of the Spirit of God, preach a doctrine in direct opposition to others, who make the same pretensions. There are several denominations, some of whose preachers it is well known, claim to be thus highly distinguished, who differ in many essential points from each other.

2. There are some men with these pretensions, who after they have preached for a season, change their sentiments, and exhibit opinions directly contradictory to what they before exhibited, who both before and after their change, have claimed to be under the direction of the Spirit.

3. Others, with these pretensions, have proved themselves upon repeated trials, incapable of exhibiting one important doctrine, in a light sufficiently clear, to be understood or applied. We are now reduced to the necessity of believing, that these men are deceived, or that all this confusion and contradiction, is to be charged upon the Spirit of God. Can a rational man harbour for one moment a doubt on this subject? Is it not invariably acknowledged, that truth is consistent with itself? Can we believe that the Spirit of God would lead men in a path as crooked as that which is often pursued by men of these high pretensions? This it must be seen is decidedly impossible. We must either believe of course, that they make these pretensions, knowing them to be false, or that they are deceived; and certainly the latter is far the most charitable.

To this it may be objected that the Aposties were the

subjects of this supernatural, or miraculous call, and why may not others be the subjects of the same? In answer to this, we readily admit that the Apostles were thus under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit in all their preaching; but as an evidence that no such privilege ought to be expected in these days, we remark that the Apostles lived in an age of miracles. From the nature of things a dispensation of miracles cannot endure. If it were as common to see the sick restored in answer to prayer, as it is for a sleeping body to awake, it would be no more miraculous. The same remark is true in reference to every miracle, and *therefore when the purpose to be answered by them was accomplished*, it was wisely ordered that they should no longer exist. Besides, as an argument that must decide this subject, it may be observed, that no reason can be given to show, that a miracle of this nature should continue, and no others. When therefore these men, can give us evidence that they possess the other gifts of the Apostles—when they can *heal the sick—give sight to the blind—raise the dead—become fluent in unknown languages*, then we may believe that they are miraculously directed by the Spirit of God, Farther we shall see that we have still less reason to infer from the case of the Apostles, any support for these pretensions, when we remember that they enjoyed the instructions of the Lord Jesus, for more than three years. They were also so favoured of the Spirit of God, so that they were enabled to prophecy. Can this be said in favour of any individuals at the present day? On the whole, is it not plain that these pretensions, when compared with the real exhibitions of the men who make them, leave on the minds of those who look at religion with a speculative eye, an unfavourable impression, both in reference to its truth, and its importance? Can they readily believe that the Holy Spirit would commit a message, on a compliance with which is suspended the eternal interests of men, to such as show them-

selves beyond all question, unable to present a single point of it in such a light, as to be correctly understood? The question then returns, What do we understand by a divine call, to preach the gospel? or when shall we know that men are called of God to bear his message to our rebellious race? And

1. A man must possess a true *desire* for this office. "If a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work." *a* It was a desire of this kind that created the *necessity* of which the Apostle speaks. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." *b* This desire, or necessity, could not in the Apostle's case, arise from any selfish or improper views. It could not have been the effect of an anxiety for wealth or popularity. It must have been a desire to promote the immortal interests of his fellow-men, and magnify the riches of divine grace, created within him by the Spirit of God.

2. A man must possess an *ability to teach*, in order that he may give evidence, that he is called of God. This gift, or qualification, is variously described in the Scriptures of truth. It is said expressly in one passage, that he must be *apt to teach.* *c* In another it is said that a "Bishop must be temperate, holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may *be able by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers.*" *d* The Saviour observes, "Therefore every Scribe which *is instructed into the kingdom of heaven*, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure, things new and old." *e* These qualifications must be united, in order to give us evidence of a divine call. The minister of Christ must have both this true desire, and this aptness or ability to teach. One is represented as essential as the other. It must be seen that as it respects the question how we may determine when men have these evidences, that every preacher of the gospel concerning the first, must decide for himself. He only can tell whether he has that desire which it would be painful to have denied. Of the other, it must be determined by his hearers. Whether he is apt to teach, and his instructions are profitable to the people of God, and tend to build up the Redeemer's kingdom in the world, must be decided entirely by others. If a man

a 1 Tim iii 1. *b* 1 Cor. ix. 16. *c* 1 Tim. iii. 2. *d* Titus i. 7–9. *e* Mat. xiii 52.

believe that he has an upright desire for this work, and still his hearers cannot feel instructed or benefitted by his preaching, he ought to be convinced that he is deceived. On the other hand, if a man enter this sacred office as he would go to a trade, merely because he has a talent for talking or for communicating knowledge, when he has none of that desire which has been mentioned, he cannot expect the direction and assistance of him, whose operations are neither by might nor by power, but by his Spirit. It may please the great Head of the Church to make the labours of such men, instrumental in the conviction and conversion of sinners, as he often makes even the sins of men the means of their own conviction; still, as it is not because he is pleased with the motives by which they are actuated, they have no other agency in this important work, than any other instrument, by which these effects are often produced. Instances of death, disappointments, &c. are often the means of conviction, and of course, it amounts to no certain evidence that we are called of God to preach the gospel, if such effects *sometimes* follow our preaching.

It is scarcely necessary to remark in addition, that a man can have no evidence that he is called to this important work, unless he sustains a character that is fair and irreproachable. "A Bishop must be blameless as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but *a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.*" *a* A similar account is given by the Apostle in his Epistle to Timothy, to which he adds, after having told us that a Bishop must be blameless, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must be of good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil." *b* Nothing can be more obvious, than that he who would undertake to conduct his fellow men in the path that leads to heaven, should be a man who has a familiar knowledge of that path from his own experience. If it be true that men must be born again, before they can enter the kingdom of God, how important that he who attempts to teach others, should be able to form as correct a judgment of that important work, as the deceitfulness of the human heart will admit! How can he describe to

a Titus i. 7—9. *b* 1 Tim. iii 6, 7.

the anxious and inquiring sinner, the views and feelings of the real Christian, when he himself is a stranger to them?

SECTION XXI.

Conformity to the World.

Q. How far is it consistent with a life of piety, to conform to the customs of this world?

A. As far as our usefulness, and the preservation of our health, obviously demand. That a conformity to the world in many instances, and that too with the professors of the religion of Christ; is the ruin of Christian character & influence, is but too evident. The manner in which every individual should live, who professedly lives for God and for another world, is described in the Scriptures with great plainness. "I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. *And be not conformed* to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable will of God." *a* The state of society in some periods and in some parts of the world, is doubtless much better than in others; but there is no age, or place, where entire conformity can be consistent with the character of the Christian. There is no place on earth where the direction of the Apostle is not strictly adapted to the condition of the Christian: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord." *b* It would be easy, although this is considered a moral and Christian part of the world, to insert a catalogue of customs which prevail to a greater or less extent, that would task the reader's patience, to which no Christian can consistently conform. How numerous are the inventions to evade the letter of the wisest and most important laws, and to practice deception upon mankind! But we have room only to mention some of the most dangerous and ruinous habits, that prevail among us, against which every Christian should take a decided stand. It is according to the custom of this world to treat the religion of Christ, or the concerns of the soul, *as the creature of convenience*. It is with all its momentous interests, held in sub-

a Rom. xii. 1, 2. *b* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

ordination to the concerns of the present life. The serious and rational question of the Saviour, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" seems to be entirely reversed. The mass of men seem to conduct as though the world was the great concern, and nothing could be gained if that were lost. The course by which men are trained to intemperance, appears to be reduced to the order of system. Not to fall in with these customs with cheerfulness in many cases, is considered an unpardonable deviation from the principles of honour and propriety. The most dangerous snares of the adversary, and such as are adapted to effect the ruin of men in every age and condition in life, are perfectly concealed under the mantle of custom. How many things may be found, under the inoffensive and imposing title of *civil amusements*, which have a tendency the most direct to draw the mind from its highest interests!

As we have not room to mention all the vicious habits which prevail, nor to examine the arguments by which they are thought to be supported, we shall only offer some considerations, in support of what has been already stated, that we ought never to go beyond the demands of our usefulness, or health, in our conformity to the world.

1. It is expressly prohibited by him, who will judge us at the last day. "*Follow me*," is the command of our Saviour; and no one will contend *that this can be done*, while we live in conformity to this world. Neither can we while we indulge in such amusements as are not required either by our usefulness or health, "*yield our bodies and spirits* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, (which it must be plain to every mind) *is our reasonable service*."

2. A strict and impartial account is to be rendered at the last day, of all our conduct. "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof, in the day of judgment." *a* Who that has any just views of the purity and holiness of the character of God, can be willing to think of rendering an account of that time, that has been employed to no benefit but the gratification of sinful propensities?

3. We have none too much time to accomplish the great errand, on which we were sent into the world. How singular would be the appearance of a man, who could say, and

a Mat xii. 36.

say it with truth, 'I have done every thing that my Redeemer has required of me—the rest of my time I can spend in doing nothing!' The command of the Saviour is, "*Work while the day lasts;* the night cometh wherein no man can work."

4. The consequences are too solemn and fearful, should we be called to give an account of our stewardship, before we have secured the *one thing needful.* "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" *a*

5. The time of our departure from the world, is with us wholly uncertain. Who would be willing to be found away from his post, and neglecting all duty, at the moment he is summoned to the presence of his Judge? "*In such an hour as ye think not,* the Son of man cometh."

6. We are every moment promoting or opposing the kingdom of Christ in the world. "He that is not for me, is against me."

7. Our time was purchased at too dear a rate, to be wasted upon useless and sinful purposes. "For when we were sinners, Christ died for us" It is the plea of mercy, "Let it alone this year also," that prevails in our behalf. Can we employ our time in a manner he has expressly forbidden, when we are indebted for every moment, to his sufferings and death?

Q. Is it wrong for such as do not profess to be Christians, to conform to the customs of the world?

A. It must be so considered, unless one sin will palliate another, or the neglect of one duty atone for the neglect of another. Can the reader suppose that because he *has not felt a sufficient regard* for the character or authority of God to form a resolution, or promise to serve him, that he is now at liberty to treat his commands and his offers of mercy with entire neglect, and waste the only period of time in which he may secure the interests of his soul, in employments which are of no use either for time or eternity? What is this but to "despise the riches of his *goodness*, and *forbearance*, and *long suffering*," by which we treasure up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath? "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

a Isa. xxxiii. 14.

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